

THE
BREAKDOWN
OF THE
STATE IN
LEBANON,
1967 – 1976

FARID EL KHAZEN

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION BY THE AUTHOR

The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976

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Preface

The subject of this book is Lebanese politics in the pre-war period 1967–1974 and the first two years of the war in 1975–76. Lebanon's multiple wars have been widely discussed on many levels and from different perspectives. Scholars, journalists, and novelists have all written on the war. Some have focused on Lebanon in 1975, when the war erupted, others on the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and on hostage-taking operations in the mid-1980s; still others have reflected on the war years from the vantage point of its ending in the early 1990s.

Few, however, have examined the period that immediately preceded the war and tried to relate it to the development of armed conflict in the mid-1970s. With rare exceptions, students of post-independence Lebanon have analysed Lebanese politics in the 1950s, particularly the 1958 crisis, and in the 1960s, or in the war years themselves. Missing in the literature on Lebanon is a work that deals with the process of destabilisation, both in its internal and external dimensions, since the late 1960s. What this book seeks to offer is a detailed analytical account of the major developments and crises that beset Lebanon during that period.

In the course of my research on Lebanese and Arab politics, I have come to revise my views and assumptions not only about the sources of conflict and consensus in Lebanon, but also the factors that have shaped the historical evolution of Lebanese society and the workings of the confessional system. In the process, I have found the comparative historical approach to the study of Lebanese politics to be more useful than either the structural or the social process approach.

The comparative perspective has brought me to the conclusion that our understanding of Lebanon in times of crisis remains incomplete if the external, namely, the regional dimension, is not taken into account. In no period of modern Lebanese politics since the state was formed in the 1920s has the country's regional order been as inextricably linked to internal politics as it was from the late 1960s.

The book is divided into eight parts. Part I situates the process of political breakdown in comparative perspective and addresses the academic debate about Lebanon's political system in the pre-war period. In Part II the focus is on the political, communal and ideological scene prior to the war. The uneven communal development of Lebanese society is examined, notably that of the Maronite, Sunni, and Shia communities. Part III addresses the evolution, role and place of the Lebanese state in the Arab state system. Lebanon's state-society relations are compared with those of Arab countries in crisis situations involving pan-Arab issues. Part IV highlights the changing nature of Lebanese and Arab politics after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The most notable development in that period was the rise of a militant PLO. One lengthy chapter is devoted to the making of the 1969 Cairo Agreement followed by another in which post-1967 Lebanese and Arab politics and Chehabism are discussed. Part V is a detailed account of the political process and regional politics from 1970 to 1974.

The divisive issues that characterized Lebanese politics in the first half of the 1970s are explained in Part V, with emphasis on power-sharing and socio-economic change. The question raised here is to what extent these internal problems were conducive to the 1975–76 war. Another chapter covers the Sidon disturbances in early 1975. Part VII surveys the 1975–76 war in its various phases, beginning with the confrontation in 'Ayn al-Rummaneh in April 1975 and ending with the Palestinian–Syrian war in the autumn of 1976. The final part of the book is an overall analysis of the process of destabilisation that culminated in the war.

For the narrative of the period covered in this book, I relied on the highly diversified Lebanese press. I also used recently published memoirs of influential Lebanese politicians. In addition, I had access to unpublished material on Lebanese and Palestinian groups involved in the war and to official reports and data about particular events both before and during the war. This has allowed me to shed light on crucial developments in ways that

have not been possible before. Equally useful have been the interviews I made with over fifty politicians, activists, and observers of Lebanese and Arab politics in the 1960s and 1970s. Many of the people I interviewed spoke openly about their experiences and shared with me their thoughts about the period under study.

A Note on Spelling

Words or names in Arabic appear in their commonly used English and/or French spelling. The Arabic ayn and hamza were marked by straight quote marks. The prefix 'al-' is used the first time an Arabic name appears in the text, but omitted later.

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Introduction to the new edition

Farid el Khazen

More than four decades elapsed since the outbreak of war in Lebanon in 1975, and the debate still continues over its causes and outcomes. This is hardly surprising in a conflict that went on for fifteen years and involved a large number of protagonists, both internal and external, state and non-state actors. When warfare ended in 1990, the conflict had little resemblance to that of the mid-1970s, when it began: participants, objectives, regional and international politics were no longer the same. The only unchanging dimension of conflict was its territorial setting: war-torn Lebanon.

To be sure, warfare ended by an act of war rather than by a peace conference or national reconciliation. Interim Premier General Michel Aoun was removed from office by units of the Lebanese army and Syrian troops in an assault led by Damascus, with tacit American and Arab backing. The closest substitute to a negotiated settlement was the Ta'if Agreement (Wathiqat al-Wifaq al-Watani), announced on 22 October 1989, following meetings of Lebanese members of parliament in the Saudi city of Ta'if.¹

The Ta'if Agreement consisted of two main components: one dealt with political reforms, the other with national sovereignty. Various proposals to reform the political system had been advanced since the 1976 Constitutional Document, while much of the content of Ta'if was elaborated in the 1980s and gained support from political and religious leaders. The conflictual and most divisive issue, however, hinged on sovereignty, specifically the lack of an enforceable timetable for the withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon.

According to the Ta'if Agreement, Syrian troops would have to relocate to specific areas in the country, two years after reforms were introduced in the amended Constitution. Indeed, constitutional reforms went into effect in 1990, but Syrian troops did not relocate two years later. Instead, parliamentary elections were held in summer 1992 to coincide with the due date for the relocation of Syrian troops. Apart from the controversy over the 1992 election and its outcome,² the withdrawal of Syrian troops ceased to

be part of political debate. And those leaders who continued to raise the issue of Syrian-Lebanese relations were either targeted or banned. In short, post-war Lebanon was probably the only satellite state in the post-Cold War international system with Western, especially US and France, and Arab backing, notably Saudi Arabia, though for reasons which differed between the various 'sponsors' of the Syrian-run political order in post-war Lebanon.

Approaches to the study of Lebanon Three approaches have marked the study of Lebanon and the assessment of its performance, both at the level of state and society. One considers Lebanon an artificial entity and/or a failed state. With birth defects since its inception in 1920, the state, some have argued, was doomed to failure. This rather ideologically motivated reading implies that Lebanon was a dispensable entity,³ Another reading, albeit from a different perspective, links failure in Lebanon to the confessional political system and/or to the lack of attributes of homogeneous, stable democratic countries. Although the confessional system has had its faults, it has been a given, even preceding state formation, while Lebanon's inability to meet the norms and practices of stable democratic politics may lead some to declaring it inherently deficient.⁴ But that does not explain how Lebanon managed to deal with challenges and crises when confessional politics

prevailed from independence in 1943 until the outbreak of war in 1975.

Another approach, diametrically opposed, views Lebanon as an exemplary state, and internal divisions are considered a source of enriching diversity. Lebanon, therefore, is not only conflict-free; it is also a model to emulate. Whatever conflicts occurred, they were, according to this reading, the outcome of external developments. This self-denial absolves Lebanese of any blame and even responsibility. In a way, even Lebanon's war can then be attributed to others.⁵

The third approach, to which this book subscribes, considers Lebanon, both state and society, a country that had its historical experience, both before and after state formation, and particularities with attributes and defaults. Lebanon should be placed in proper comparative context to make sense of what happened, both in times of peace and war, stability and chaos. Leaving aside clichés, rigid views and value judgement, Lebanon has had its ups and downs, achievements and failings. This reading is a function of the benchmarks by which one would evaluate the performance of the political system. Compared to democratic countries in conflict-free regional orders, Lebanon may be declared deficient. But when situated in a regional context, the order to which Lebanon belongs and with which it had interacted, Lebanon had merits and faults that can be explained. Lebanon's experience, in short, was neither hell nor paradise.

After independence, Lebanon parted ways with political orders in most Arab countries. Lebanon's non-authoritarian state, civilian rule and open society ran counter to norms and practices that prevailed in the Arab state system, dominated by the military or by monarchies with unrestrained power. For example, when Syria, Egypt and Iraq were ruled by military regimes for whatever reasons and objectives, Lebanon had a competitive political process, regular elections (though not always free and fair), active political parties, a free press and an army under civilian control. Lebanon's liberal, competitive order was put to test in times of regional crises. The most serious crisis prior to 1975 was that of 1958. This six-month crisis, reflecting internal dissent, regional turmoil and Cold War polarization, was not only contained; it generated an unprecedented attempt, initiated by

President Fouad Chehab, to rebuild state institutions on the basis of equality, socioeconomic development and the rule of law.

Clearly, Lebanon was divided along political and confessional lines, but it was the same state and society that gave the country stability and prosperity for over three decades, before drifting to war. The issue is not whether or not Lebanon is fractured, which it is, but rather when and how internal divisions would be conducive to political crisis or armed conflict, as was the case in the mid-1970s. In times of regional turmoil, Lebanon's state and society found themselves competing with political and social orders that had instruments of power and control which Lebanon lacked. In other words, Lebanon's assets in time of stability – its openness, political and cultural diversity, and market economy – became liabilities in time of acute regional conflict.⁶

In the aftermath of defeat in the 1967 war, Arab states and societies were deeply shaken and adjustment was not within immediate reach. This was a time when the gap between Lebanon and the regional order continued to widen. As Lebanon became more open and liberal, Arab regimes became more repressive and societies sealed off from regional politics. For example, in post-1967 Arab politics, Syria had a military coup in 1970, Nasser was on the defensive with declining power and prestige, Iraq witnessed its second Ba'athist coup in 1968 and Jordan was the scene of war in 1970 between PLO guerrillas, mobilized in the name of the armed struggle, and the Jordanian regime.

A similar dynamic of conflict took place in Lebanon between the Lebanese army and the PLO, well-established in Lebanon in the 1970s and emboldened by the 1969 Cairo Agreement, which gave guerrilla groups privileges that ran counter to Lebanese sovereignty. It was a matter of time until war broke out, when it became clear that no settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict was possible, following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and its inconclusive outcome. For the post-1973 PLO, left behind by Syria and Egypt and forced out of Jordan, Lebanon ended up becoming its last remaining refuge and indispensable political and military base.

In its first edition, the book covered these events in great detail, bringing to light various dimensions of conflict, particularly those which received little attention in the literature on Lebanon. Differentiation was made

between political crisis and armed conflict. Lebanon's political process, fractured along political and confessional lines, was gradually militarized in the first half of the 1970s. In this way, it is difficult to explain the process that culminated in war in 1975 by situating events in rigid dualities: Christian vs Muslim, Left vs Right, Palestinian vs non-Palestinian, Arab vs Israeli and so on. While all these dimensions were there, they had different influences on decision-making and, therefore, on the timing and impact of political crises and armed conflicts. For example, the seven-month political crisis that resulted in the Cairo Agreement in 1969 involved Lebanese politicians exercising mutual vetoes as well as the PLO and its Arab supporters, notably Syria, Egypt and Iraq. The 1973 crisis in Lebanon involved the same actors but different regional circumstances prevailed in the aftermath of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. Subsequently in the 1970s and 1980s, new actors and a different regional order emerged along with changing international politics in the Middle East.

Layers of conflict after the 1975–76 war The course of events in the war years confirmed the main conclusions of the book. So did a study that came out recently, based on US State Department archives covering the same period.⁷ Worth noting also are statements made by respected politicians and intellectuals actively involved in the 1960s and 1970s.⁸ Needless to say, several actors with divergent agendas engaged in warfare. In addition to Lebanese factions, PLO guerrillas, some linked to rival Arab regimes, were involved until the mid-1980s, as well as Syria and Israel, and Iran since the early 1980s. Conflict was in constant mutation, so were alliances, objectives and the balance of power in its political

and military dimensions. One way to explain wartime developments is to highlight their multiple, overlapping layers.

One layer consisted of the internal dimension of conflict: state, society, leaders and parties-turned-militias. In post-1976 Lebanon, a militia order was in place with well-organized armed groups. By contrast, the marginalization of state institutions, notably the armed forces, continued. Unlike the rather spontaneous communally or ideologically driven armed groups from all political persuasions in the first two years of the war, warfare after 1976 was institutionalized, well-funded and more in tune with regional developments than before. And unlike the first two years of the war, there was no betting on 'military solutions'. Rather, focus was on how to manage and take advantage of the status quo, believed to prevail, contrary to the expectations of rapid and drastic change in 1975–76. After 1976, 'zero-sum' conduct and schemes were put on hold, and more political realism prevailed. Meanwhile, armed conflict shifted to another domain: violent clashes within communities and armed groups.

The war years involved the settling of old scores within communities and/or within the same political camp. One violent confrontation within the Christian community was a feud over power and influence between the Kataeb Party and the Suleiman Frangieh clan. The 'Ehden massacre' in 1977 resulted in the killing of Frangieh's son, Tony, members of his family and several of his followers in his home in northern Lebanon. Bloody feuds continued between Christian-based militias and, in the late 1980s, between Shia-based militias, Amal and Hizbollah. Moreover, in the mid-1980s, militias associated with the leftist Lebanese National Movement engaged in violent street fighting in (then West) Beirut, notably the clash between Sunni-based al-Murabitun militia, backed by Arafat's Fateh, facing Amal and the Progressive Socialist Party. Another confrontation with sectarian overtones took place in Mount Lebanon between the Lebanese Forces (coalition of Christian-based militias) and Druze-based militia led by Walid Jumblatt. With the Israeli army in control in that part of Lebanon in 1983, confrontations led to the massive displacement of Christian civilians from

the Shouf and Aley regions. This was the worst episode of sectarian violence since 1860.

It was also a time when Lebanese government institutions were deeply divided and paralysed. The Lebanese army underwent its second fragmentation in 1984; the first was in 1976. Even established and popular leaders were not spared: Kamal Jumblatt was assassinated in 1977, Bachir Gemayel in 1982, Rachid Karame in 1987, Mufti Hassan Khalid in 1989 and Dany Chamoun in 1990, while Imam Musa al-Sadr disappeared while on a visit to Libya in 1978. Although occurring under radically different circumstances, these events had far-reaching repercussions on the course of the war both within and between communities.

The second layer consisted of the PLO, well-entrenched in Lebanon after 1976 with a large network of alliances with Lebanese leaders and parties. It exercised significant power in areas under its control, specifically in the south, the beqa', parts of the north and (then) West Beirut. The PLO did not only act as a state within a state, it brought with it the Arab-Israeli conflict. In fact, south Lebanon was the only active war zone between Israel and PLO after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and, subsequently, warfare in Lebanon was partly a function of a new regional balance of power generated by the 1979 Camp David Accord, which ended the state of war between Egypt and Israel.⁹ Camp David had far-reaching consequences: Egypt was out of the Arab-Israeli conflict, while Israel had a free hand to target the PLO in Lebanon.

In fact, it was a matter of time until Israel, emboldened by Camp David and led by a homogenous group of radical figures, took military action. Israel's militant mood was already apparent in 1981, when it attacked the Iraqi nuclear reactor, annexed the Golan Heights and clashed, for the first time, with Syria in Lebanon. By 1982, it was common knowledge that Israel was planning a massive military operation in Lebanon. A pretext was needed, and that came with the assassination attempt of Israel's ambassador to London. Israel's strategic objective in 1982 was the elimination of the PLO's military and political infrastructure in Lebanon. Following the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, fully implemented by 1981, and with the Golan Heights conflict-free since 1974, the PLO was the only major threat left in Israeli calculations. A powerful PLO in Lebanon, increasingly

opposed by Lebanese groups, including in Shia territory in the south, and with an alliance struck between Bachir Gemayel and Israeli defence minister Ariel Sharon, the invasion's main architect, the timing of an all-out war seemed favourable, not to mention the lack of Arab support for the PLO, contrary to that of the late 1960s and 1970s.

The 1982 Israeli invasion was largely the outcome of the drastic transformation in regional power politics, in favour of Israel,¹⁰ unlike the first Israeli invasion in 1978, which was limited in scope and objectives. Arafat's attempt to regain foothold in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli in 1983 failed and was forced out by the Syrian army. The last episode of warfare involving the PLO in Lebanon was the so-called War of the Camps in 1985–6 opposing Arafat-led forces in Beirut and Syrian-backed Shia militia, Amal. The post-1982 PLO, in its Tunis de facto exile, was greatly weakened: it lacked autonomy and grassroots support, and had no territorial access to Israel.

Israel's prime objective was met with the evacuation of PLO leaders and forces from Beirut, but its other objectives failed, notably the 17 May Accord in 1983, after months of US-sponsored negotiations between Lebanon and Israel. Internal divisions aggravated, despite attempts at reconciliation in meetings of Lebanese leaders held in Geneva in October 1983 and Lausanne in March 1984. Meanwhile, Syria regained the upper hand, following recovery from military setbacks suffered in 1982, thanks to renewed Soviet support. Moreover, a secret annex to the 17 May Accord between Israel and the United States, linking Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon to that of Syria, made its implementation impossible. By then, the United States was preparing to withdraw its troops, which were the target of a second suicide bombing in 1983, along with French troops – both part of the Multinational Forces deployed in Lebanon. The Israeli army ended up withdrawing unilaterally to the so-called security zone in the south, controlled by the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army, without any coordination with the Lebanese government.

A third layer had to do with Syrian policy and its multiple agendas in Lebanon: bilateral Syrian-Lebanese relations both before and after the outbreak of war in 1975; competition and rivalry with the Arafat-led PLO; regional politics, notably inter-Arab rivalries and alliance with Islamic Iran;

the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially in the aftermath of Camp David; and finally international politics through Lebanon's conflicts. One dimension of conflict, which received little attention in the narrative of the war years, involved the Syrian-Palestinian confrontation, fought out between Syrian-sponsored al-Sa'iqa guerrillas and Arafat's Fateh, and overlapping with pro-Syrian Lebanese groups feuding with pro-PLO groups, also backed by Libya and Iraq.

Beginning in the late 1960s, Syria gave support to the PLO through al-Sa'iqa and to Lebanese parties associated with the PLO, but then clashed with them in 1976. Asad and Arafat were hardly on good terms, and any military takeover in Lebanon in 1976 by Arafat-led PLO was a challenge that Asad would not tolerate, nor would Lebanese Christian parties fighting the PLO. In addition, containing the PLO in 1976 was in line with American and Israeli interests. After Camp David, however, a rapprochement began to take shape between Syria and Palestinian organizations.

A newcomer to wartime Lebanon was Islamic Iran in the early 1980s. Iran's political and military intervention in Lebanon was a decisive turning point in Syria's involvement in Lebanon and an accessible testing ground for Syrian-Iranian relations. Syria backed Amal, facing Hizbollah, initially backed by the PLO. The Amal-Hizbollah clash in the late 1980s ended with an agreement made possible by Syria and Iran. It was based on a division of labour between the two Shia-based parties: Hizbollah would engage in warfare in Israeli-occupied south, while Amal's engagement would be in Lebanese government institutions. In fact, Amal leader Nabih Berri was elected speaker of parliament in 1992.

As for regional and international politics, Syria was able to maintain close ties with the Soviet Union and a working relationship with the United States, while strengthening relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Lebanon's multiple conflicts were skilfully manipulated to serve Syria's interests in Arab and global politics. Syria abided by the pre-set rules of the game with Israel, both in Lebanon and the Golan Heights. Although it had unhindered access to Lebanon, Damascus was aware of the limits of its power when the interests of more powerful parties were at stake. Syrian president Hafez-al-Asad mastered the skill of combining an

unusual mix of pragmatism and radicalism. And that was possible in Lebanon rather than in Syria itself.

A final layer in wartime Lebanon had to do with regional politics, particularly regarding its two dimensions: inter-Arab rivalries, especially between Syria and Iraq, and Iranian involvement in Lebanese and regional politics. As Islamic Iran sought to 'export' its revolution, war-torn Lebanon was an ideal 'marketplace', most accessible in time of war and with a mobilized Shia community deprived of its major leader with a moderating influence, Imam Musa al-Sadr, who vanished in Libya. Initially, revolutionary Iran attracted sympathy and support in Lebanon, including in leftist circles, but then relied on Amal and, especially, Hizbollah, which espoused its Islamist doctrine embodied in *Wilayat al-Faqih*. And with the official founding of Hizbollah in 1985, relations with Iran were formalized.

Moreover, on the broader regional scene, conflict underwent continuous change. One development which had a bearing on Lebanon, particularly in the last year of the war, was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the US-led war to liberate it. Thus, in return for Syria's participation in the coalition forces to liberate Kuwait, though of symbolic importance, Damascus was given a free hand in Lebanon.

Warfare ended in Lebanon when conflict was reduced to a fragile act of military balancing. The conflict's political settlement was embodied in the Ta'if Agreement, approved by Lebanese and non-Lebanese parties, except General Aoun. The latter's opposition, focusing on the lack of an enforceable implementation mechanism that would lead to Syrian army withdrawal, was ignored. In fact, Aoun's removal was in line with regional and international interests in a deeply divided Lebanon not only on Aoun's position but also on the Ta'if Agreement.

To summarize, war unfolded in phases. The first two years of the war (1975–76) was an initial testing ground for Lebanese and non-Lebanese parties, engaged in successive political and armed conflicts. This cycle of instability and turmoil began in 1969 and culminated in 1975–76, reflecting shifting alliances and objectives. Meanwhile, the rift continued to widen between Christian and Muslim leaders, and between the latter and Kamal Jumblatt, the Druze leader on the Left, who was probably the main loser in the 1976 clash between Syria and the PLO. From 1977 to 1990 warfare continued with periods of calm preceding further escalation, while attempts

to end conflict failed. One major turning point was the 1982 Israel invasion of Lebanon and its aftermath, followed by the last phase of warfare in 1989–90 which generated the Ta'if Agreement.

Wartime Lebanon (1977–90) After a lull of a few months in 1977, and following the formation of the Arab Deterrent Forces to facilitate the ending of warfare, preceded by the election of a new president Elias Sarkis, hostilities resumed. The 30,000 Arab Deterrent Forces were mainly Syrian, as Arab contingents began to withdraw and President Sarkis was its nominal leader. Lebanese government institutions were paralysed and a militia order was now in place, representing various Lebanese parties and communities, at a time when a new generation of militant leaders gained increasing influence.

Lebanon was a convenient battleground that suited the interests of the warring factions. Clashes occurred in 'East Beirut' between Syria and the Lebanese Forces in 1978, while the PLO went unchallenged in areas under its control. But what shaped the course of events in the late 1970s and early 1980s were developments occurring in regional politics, notably Camp David. The PLO took Israeli threats seriously and abided by a US-negotiated ceasefire with Israel, following a brief Syrian-Israeli clash in Lebanon in 1981. By then, the PLO sought to protect its 'investments' in Lebanon by not giving Israel an excuse to undermine its largely autonomous base in Lebanon – ironically, the same reasoning advocated by Lebanese politicians since the late 1960s opposed to turning Lebanon into a 'confrontation state'. But PLO's cautious attitude in the early 1980s fell short of deterring Israel from carrying out a massive military operation in 1982 – with a 'green light' from Washington, which cost US Secretary of

State Alexander Haig his post, as he resigned and was blamed for not deterring Israel from military action.

Another phase of the war began with the 1982 Israeli invasion, which had repercussions far beyond Lebanon; it helped reshape not only the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict but also Syrian policy, Israeli politics and US policy towards Lebanon. With renewed Soviet backing and the PLO out of Lebanon, and when Washington disengaged from Lebanon in early 1984 and Israeli troops relocated to the south, Syria regained strength and self-confidence.

Indeed, with no external competitors to worry about, Syria sought to consolidate hegemony in the mid-1980s. But parts of the country were not under its firm control: Christian areas dominated by the Lebanese Forces in the so-called 'East Beirut'. In these areas, Lebanese government institutions maintained some presence, notably the Lebanese army led by General Michel Aoun. For Damascus, time was ripe to regain influence in 'East Beirut'. Instead of a costly military operation, difficult to justify, Syrian vice-president Abdul-Halim Khaddam embarked on an attempt to bring together militia leaders to agree on political reforms. For that purpose, a Christian partner was needed, and that was Elie Hobeiqa. Initially associated with Bachir Gemayel and having links with Israel as intelligence chief of the Lebanese Forces, Hobeiqa struck a deal with Damascus and provided whatever Christian political cover was necessary for the militia-based Tripartite Accord in December 1985. The Accord, which included Amal and the Progressive Socialist Party, was negotiated outside government institutions and without the involvement of Lebanese officials. In short, the Accord aimed at institutionalizing Syrian hegemony through militia control.

Before long, the Tripartite Accord collapsed, when Lebanese Forces units led by Samir Geagea assaulted the Hobeiqa headquarters in Beirut in January 1986 and forced him out. Opposition to the Accord came also from President Amin Gemayel. Hobeiqa's attempt to regain a foothold in 'East Beirut' in September 1986 was repelled by the Lebanese army. The Accord failed, it was indicative of Syria's increasing power, particularly when Syrian army withdrawal was no longer an issue of public debate. Although boycotted by Syria, Gemayel's negotiations with Damascus went on with

Washington's limited involvement until the end of Gemayel's term in 1988, and resulted in no agreement.¹¹

The war's final phase (1988–90) witnessed the rise of Lebanese army commander General Aoun to the political scene. Initially nominated interim prime minister, a few minutes before the end of President Gemayel's term, Aoun clashed with the Lebanese Forces and, subsequently, with Syria. This led to the formation of a special Arab Tripartite Committee made up of Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Morocco in 1989: it called for Syrian withdrawal, but then changed its recommendations a few months later and adopted Syria's position.¹² By then, Aoun's popularity peaked in Christian areas, at a time when Syria had extensive control in the rest of the country and the backing of major powers.

In the end, the Ta'if Agreement was brokered. It restructured the power structure: executive power is vested in the Council of Ministers, headed by the prime minister, nominated after presidential mandatory consultations with members of parliament. In practice, presidential power was curtailed and much of its prerogatives, according to the 1926 Constitution, were now in the hands of the Council of Ministers, while maintaining representation in line with the confessional political system. In addition, the speaker's term was extended from one to four years and parliament size was up from 99 to 108 to insure parity in Christian-Muslim representation.

Initially, Ta'if was opposed by some, criticized by others, but eventually seemed the only available option under the circumstances. Ta'if was also a convenient instrument of power politics with hidden agendas for all parties: the best possible compromise for Lebanese parties and for Syria at a time of regional instability; an exit strategy for the United States, which satisfied Saudi Arabia; and a pragmatic fait accompli in an increasingly marginalized Lebanon at a time when international and regional actors were preoccupied by more pressing concerns. It is important to note that the last two years of the war in Lebanon coincided with momentous developments: the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Post-war Lebanon (1990–2005) The first major challenge facing Lebanon following the end of

hostilities in 1990 was the implementation of the Ta'if Agreement. The signing of the 'Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination' between Lebanon and Syria on 22 May 1991 was a clear indication that Ta'if fell short of meeting Syria's objectives. Covering various aspects of the so-called 'privileged relations' between Syria and Lebanon – involving political, economic and security issues, foreign policy, education and culture¹³ – the Treaty aimed at institutionalizing Syria's hold over decision-making, particularly in security and foreign policy, and introduced provisions and practices that went far beyond the Ta'if Agreement.

Member of parliament and veteran politician René Moawad, elected president after Ta'if in a hasty session of parliament held in a military barrack in the north, was assassinated a few days after his election. His successor, Member of parliament Elias Hrawi, was not only Syria's choice, but was also willing to provide the political cover for the forceful removal of General Aoun from office on 13 October 1989.

Only a few months after nominating forty deputies (out of a total of ninety-nine) in 1991 to fill vacancies in parliament – the term of which had been extended five times since 1972 – Damascus was intent on holding parliamentary election in 1992 according to a controversial electoral law, opposed by many politicians. The timing of the election was meant to prevent the relocation of Syrian troops to specified areas in Lebanon due in 1992. Elections resulted in a parliament subservient to Damascus. Whether it was 'a coup against Ta'if' or a Ta'if that had little resemblance to the original text and the outcome that was intended, as explained by a key

architect of Ta'if, former parliament speaker Hussein al-Husseini, the Ta'if Agreement was quickly derailed.¹⁴

Subsequent parliamentary elections in 1996 and 2000, each held under a different electoral law, were no different in outcome and impact from the 1992 election. One blatant violation of the Ta'if Agreement was the increase in the number of parliamentary seats from 108 to 128. Although this issue was raised in the Ta'if meetings and was turned down, Damascus pushed to add twenty parliamentary seats in 1992 to facilitate the election of its supporters. One striking example was the introduction of a Maronite seat in Tripoli, where Maronites are a small minority not exceeding a few hundred voters. Boycotted by many Christians and with an overall low turnout, post-war elections performed functions similar to those performed in non-democratic regimes: that is, preserving the trappings of democratic practice, but with hardly any significant impact on decision-making.¹⁵ The same applied to other institutions of government. Perhaps the most revealing episode was Hafez al-Asad's decision to extend Elias Hrawi's presidential term for three years, in violation of the Constitution. Asad's decision was made public in a press interview aboard his jet while travelling to Cairo. Although at first Lebanese politicians objected, including pro-Syrian government officials, parliament then amended the Constitution to allow the extension of Hrawi's term.

A relative newcomer to the political scene in the post-war period was Lebanese-Saudi wealthy businessman Rafic Hariri. He initially took part in the making of the militia-based, Syrian-sponsored Tripartite Accord in 1985, which never saw the light. But Hariri was particularly involved in the Ta'if negotiations in 1989 and had been closely associated with Crown Prince (later) King Fahd.

Since he became prime minister in 1992, Hariri's relations with Syria went through ups and downs, but were kept in line with Saudi-Syrian interests. Moreover, a *modus vivendi* prevailed in the 1990s, made possible by Damascus. It rested on a *de facto* working arrangement between Hariri and Hizbollah, which suited the interests of both parties. Hariri would engage in post-war reconstruction and in business dealings along with his associates, mostly Gulf investors, and was able to put in place an unprecedented large-scale real estate project (Solidère), which turned old

downtown Beirut into a private property, while Hizbollah would have a free hand in military operations against Israeli occupation in the south. In essence, two divergent models operated simultaneously, that of 'Hong Kong and Hanoi', as characterized by Walid Jumblatt.

In domestic politics, Syria exercised unrestrained influence and relied on a large and effective network. Most revealing was the so-called 'Troika', made up of the president, the prime minister and parliament speaker – all locked in a pattern of built-in paralysis in decision-making. Only Damascus was in a position to prevent deadlock and regulate relations between the 'Troika' officials who depended on Syria for maintaining influence. As for the Lebanese army and security forces, they were under tight control, practically run by Damascus.

Similarly, in foreign policy there was hardly any leeway for autonomous decisions. This was a time when the United States launched Arab-Israeli peace talks in October 1991. Lebanon, like other parties, took part in the talks but only when they led nowhere – specifically, in the first round of negotiations held in Washington. But when negotiations began to make headway, following the 1993 Oslo Accord between the PLO and Israel, and when Syria began to engage in direct talks with Israel in 1994, Lebanon ceased any involvement in the negotiations. And as the PLO began to implement the first phase of the Oslo Accord and when Syria was on the verge of reaching an agreement with Israel, which included detailed arrangements in the Golan Heights,¹⁶ war continued to escalate in south Lebanon.

In the 1990s, confrontations between Israel and Hizbollah intensified, and Israel carried out two large-scale military operations in 1993 and 1996. The latter, known as the 'Grapes of Wrath', targeted civilians and infrastructure, and resulted in the so-called 'April Understanding'. Brokered by Damascus, Washington and Paris, the Understanding sought to manage warfare, rather than stop it, but with a condition to exclude civilian targets.¹⁷ A security committee was formed, co-chaired by the United States and France and included Lebanese, Israeli and Syrian representatives, to monitor the implementation of the deal, in which Hizbollah was not directly involved, for it was boycotted by the United States and Israel. In practice, the 'April Understanding' legitimized warfare between Hizbollah and Israel under de

facto international supervision – until 2000. By then, Hizbollah intensified military operations in the south and succeeded in making Israeli occupation costly, as casualties continued to mount with hardly any convincing justification to the Israeli public for occupying south Lebanon. Israel was forced to withdraw and to abide by UNSCR 425, which had called for unconditional withdrawal since 1978 but was not implemented until 2000.

Israeli army pull-out generated a new phase in post-war Lebanese politics. The argument advanced all along by Damascus and its Lebanese supporters – that Ta'if would be properly implemented only when Israel withdrew from Lebanon – it was now time to put it to the test. It is against this background that Patriarch Sfeir issued a statement in September 2000 in the name of the Council of Maronite Bishops calling for Syrian troop withdrawal, thus breaking a taboo in political discourse for nearly a decade.

By then, Damascus made no effort to conceal its intention to maintain its hold on Lebanon and targeted leaders and parties opposed to Syrian policy. Apart from Aoun's opposition since 1990, Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea, who initially backed Ta'if, had been in detention since 1994, following the bombing of a church from which he was acquitted. For Damascus, Christian leaders supporting Ta'if were on equal footing with those who opposed it. But while senior Muslim government officials were established, popular leaders within their respective communities, notably Berri and Hariri, the two Maronite presidents, Hrawi and Lahoud, lacked credibility and popularity and were largely dependent on Damascus for support. Alarmed by an increasingly assertive and vocal opposition, Damascus sought to prevent any attempt that would bring together Christian and Muslim leaders to agree on a platform regarding the implementation of Ta'if, including Syrian army withdrawal. Under these circumstances, a new political Gathering was formed in 2001, 'liqa' Qornet Chehwan', sponsored by the Maronite Patriarch, and included major Christian leaders and parties. Aoun's representatives took part in the early phases of the formation of the Gathering, but opted to stay out, though both sides shared the objective of Syrian army withdrawal.

Concurrently, Lebanon's political scene was influenced by events that altered the course of international and regional politics: the 9/11 attacks in the United States in 2001 and, subsequently, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Following the war in Afghanistan to root out al-Qa'ida, accused of

9/11, and Taliban, the United States carried out a massive military operation to remove the Saddam Hussein regime, falsely accused of possessing weapons of mass destruction. What concerns us here are the repercussions of Iraqi developments in Lebanon. Most affected by this turn of events were US-Syrian relations, which rapidly deteriorated, when American troops in Iraq came under attack by armed groups believed to be backed by Damascus.

American warnings to Damascus went unheeded, and this led to a change in US policy towards Syria and its role in Lebanon. The passing of UNSCR 1559 on 2 September 2004 – calling for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon and for the disarming of militias, as well as for not amending the Constitution to allow for the extension of President Lahoud's term – was indicative of this drastic shift in US policy and that of major powers.

Political mobilization and polarization now reached the 'street', which reflected the deepening divide between the pro-Syrian camp, led by Hizbollah, and those calling for Syrian army withdrawal and the implementation of UNSCR 1559. Prior to that, Druze leader Walid Jumblatt had been vocal in his criticism of Syria's conduct in Lebanon and, subsequently, accused the regime of being behind the killing of his father. The assassination attempt of Member of parliament Marwan Hamadé, Jumblatt's long-time associate, in 2004 was indicative of the highly polarized situation in the country. Then came an unprecedented sequence of events and reactions, both in Lebanon and abroad, triggered by the assassination of then-former prime minister Rafic Hariri on 14 February 2005.

One of the most influential figures in the country, a close associate of Saudi leaders and a personal friend of French president Jacques Chirac, Hariri's assassination was an earth-shattering event. Sunni-based Hariri supporters, now openly critical of Syria, joined ranks with Christian-based parties, mobilized for decades in opposition to Syrian hegemony in Lebanon. By March 2005, mainstream public opinion in three communities shared the objective of Syrian army withdrawal: Christian, Sunni and Druze. Opposed were the two major Shia-based parties, Hizbollah and Amal, along with smaller groupings, notably Maronite leader Suleiman Frangieh, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party and others. A show of force by the pro-Syrian camp materialized in a large gathering in Beirut on 8 March.

This in turn instigated one of Lebanon's largest demonstrations a few days later on 14 March.¹⁸ The die was cast. By the end of April 2005 the Syrian army withdrew from Lebanon.

Parliamentary elections held in June 2005 redressed the political imbalance in the country. This was most visible in the Christian community, the most targeted since the early 1990s. General Aoun, who returned from exile only a few days prior to elections, was faced by electoral alliances which brought together all political parties on both sides of the Syrian divide. Although Aoun scored a sweeping electoral victory with over 75 per cent of Christian vote throughout the country, countering Aoun continued in the first cabinet formed after Syrian pull-out, headed by Fouad Siniora, Hariri's close associate. Political groups, both opposed to and supportive of Syria, were represented in the new cabinet, except the large parliamentary group headed by General Aoun. A few months later, yet another reshaping of alliances brought together Aoun and Hizbollah in February 2006.

Although Syria disengaged from direct meddling in Lebanon along with its army and security apparatus, it continued to retain influence through parties in and outside government – until war broke out in Syria in 2011. Moreover, Israel's massive attack in summer 2006, in response to Hizbollah's kidnapping of Israeli soldiers, was a reminder that Lebanon could not be dissociated from the Arab-Israeli conflict, though it was no longer its main battlefield. UNSCR 1701, passed in 2006, reinforced United Nations Forces (UNIFIL) operating in Lebanon since 1978 and led to the deployment of the Lebanese army on the borderline with Israel. This has given unprecedented stability and order in the south.

By 2005, Lebanon regained patterns of internal rivalries, but it was a political scene that differed from that of the pre-war period, the war years and its aftermath. In comparison, the pre-war period (1943–75) witnessed political alliances that cut across confessional lines and competition involved government facing opposition, while corruption was limited and accountability was possible through the electoral process. In fact, Chehabist political and military influence, entrenched for over a decade, was dismantled with the election of the opposition candidate Suleiman Frangieh to the presidency in 1970 by a margin of one vote in parliament. One divisive issue in pre-war Lebanon revolved around national identity, namely

Arab identity, which meant during the war close relations with Syria. National identity is no longer a polarizing issue in present-day Lebanon the same way it was before, but other identity-based issues have surfaced relating to Islamist politics. But in a country like Lebanon, Islamist agendas are recipes for sectarian fragmentation and political paralysis.

Contrary to the pre-war years, stakes were high in post-war Lebanon not only politically but also economically. Never before in Lebanon were economic and financial interests wedded to political office and government institutions, along with widespread corruption and wasteful government spending and large public debt, as was the case since the early 1990s.¹⁹ Remnants of wartime politics were institutionalized after war ended, but new patterns emerged. Most notably, the internal divide shifted from confessionalism (i.e., Christian vs Muslims) to sectarianism, expressed in political alliances, cabinet coalitions and political parties – in line with patterns of change in regional politics. Gone were ideological politics and pan-Arabism that had characterized Lebanese and Arab politics prior to the 1970s.

Similarly, as Arab politics underwent change, the bases and objectives of regional power politics have also been altered. In brief, the transformation in regional politics affecting Lebanon was a function of several developments: the decline of the centrality of the Arab-Israeli conflict in Arab politics; Islamic Iran projecting unprecedented power in the region since the early 1980s; widespread politicized sectarian conflict; Islamist radicalism both within and between states; Syrian-Saudi axis replacing Egypt's role in Arab politics; and US foreign policy, especially since the end of the Cold War, thus shifting focus from broad regional issues to country-based agendas, initiated in Iraq.

After 2005, the balance of power in Lebanon reflected an unusual overlap between political, economic and sectarian interests. Change was visible within the Sunni community when Sa'ad Hariri took over, inheriting his father's Za'amah and legacy. Within the Shia community, the Hizbollah-Amal alliance was solidified in the aftermath of the vacuum left by Syria's pull-out, while maintaining significant influence both in communal and national politics. So did Walid Jumblatt who went uncontested in communal politics and aspired to a pivotal role beyond the Druze community. As for

the Christian community, its most representative leaders have been actively involved since 2005 and rivalry between them has continued. And unlike other communities, there was no monopoly of power within the Christian community. In a way, shifting political alliances since 2005 were partly a function of the political positioning of Christian-based parties.

Concluding observations

In nearly ten years, Lebanon's two neighbouring countries, ravaged by successive wars, were completely transformed – Iraq since 2003 and Syria since 2011 – resulting in massive atrocities and dislocations. The breakdown in Syria and Iraq gave way to a vacuum in regional politics, filled by Iran and, to a lesser extent, Turkey. This has also paved the way for military interventions by state and non-state actors, notably an armed jihadi group (ISIS) proclaiming a 'state' of its own.

Despite the fact that ingredients of conflict are present in Lebanon, just as in neighbouring countries, Lebanon has managed to weather the storm. This can be attributed to two main reasons: one has to do with attempts by Lebanese leaders to avoid being driven in a conflict at the risk of turning the country into a regional battlefield, as was the case in previous years; another relates to external parties, both regional and major powers, which have had accessible war zones to project power in no fewer than four countries: Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya.

Lebanon gained relative immunity to recent regional disturbances, not because it is less divided than before but rather because significant interests are at stake. In fact, internal turmoil can be self-destructive at a time when Lebanese groups and parties have made significant 'achievements' in recent years – political, economic and military – which would not have been possible except in Lebanon.

Throughout history, Lebanese communities have experienced periods of ascendancy and retrenchment. This was manifested in different ways and under varying circumstances and expressed in political power and economic resources, demographic structure, military capabilities, as well as education and culture. The uneven communal development of Lebanese society and the way in which communities have come to relate to the state have been an ongoing process of historical change over a long period of time. Despite their differences, Lebanese groups may have come to realize that there is no viable substitute to the state.

The rediscovery of the importance of the state and its role in providing political and economic stability from which all Lebanese would benefit, while maintaining their differences, is a continuous challenge facing

Lebanon, all the more so when other options are either costly or beyond reach.

Notes

- 1 See Joseph Maïla, *The Document of National Understanding: A Commentary* (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1992).
- 2 See Farid el Khazen, *Lebanon's First Postwar Parliamentary Election: An imposed choice* (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese studies, 1998).
- 3 This reading is prevalent in Leftist circles and ideological parties such as the SSNP.
- 4 See, for example, Michel Hudson, *The Precarious Republic, Political Modernization in Lebanon* (Westview Press, 1985); Elizabeth Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country: Myths and Realities of the Wars in Lebanon* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996).
- 5 See, for example, Ghassan Tuéni, *Une Guerre pour les Autres* (Paris: Lattès, 1985).
- 6 See book chapters 7, 8, 9.
- 7 James R. Stocker, *Spheres of Interventions: US Foreign Policy and the Collapse of Lebanon, 1967 – 1976*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016). See also Nqula Nassif, *Al –Maktab al-Thani, Hakimun fi al-Zul* (Zalka: Mukhtarar, 2006), pp. 237-364.
- 8 Fouad Boutros, *Al-Mouzakarar* (Beirut: Dar Sa'ir al-Mashreq, 2017). See also Mohsin Ibrahim's speech on the war years, in *Al-Safir*, August 8, 2005, and Joe Khoury al Helou, *Charles Helou Wa Itifaq al-Qahira, Haqa'iq Wa Asrar* (Beirut: Dar Sa'ir al-Mashreq, 2018).
- 9 William B. Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1986).
- 10 Avner Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security: Politics, Strategy and the Israeli Experience in Lebanon* (Oxford: University Press, 1987).
- 11 George Saadé, *Qissati Ma'a al Ta'if* (Beirut: n.p., 1998). See also Elie Salem, *Al-Khayarat al-Sa'ba. Diblomasiyat al-Bahth 'an Makhraj* (Beirut: Shariqat al-Matbu'at littwazi' wa al-nashr, 1993).
- 12 William Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sect, Wars, and Global Extensions* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publications, 1997), pp. 247-260.
- 13 On postwar Syrian-Lebanese Relations, see collective work *Al-'Alaqat al-Lubnaniya al-Suriya: Muhawala Taqwimiya* (Antelias: al Haraka al Thaqafiya, Antelias, 2003).
- 14 *An-Nahar*, November 7, 1994. See also Albert Mansour, *Al Inqilab 'ala al-Ta'if* (Beirut: Dar al-Jadid, 1993); Issam Suleiman, *Al-Jumhuriya al Thaniya Bayna al-Nusus wa al-Mumarasa* (Beirut: n.p. 1998).
- 15 Farid el Khazen, *Intikhabat Lubnan ma Ba'd al-Harb 1992, 1996, 2000: Dimuqratiya Bila Khayar* (Beirut: Dar al Nahar, 2000). See also Fares Sassin, *Al-Tamthil wa al-Sulta, Majlis Nuwab 1992-1996* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Lubnani Iildirasat, 1997).
- 16 Itamar Rabinovich, *The Brink of Peace. The Israeli-Syrian Negotiations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 235-265.
- 17 Zafer al-Hasan, *Al Diblomasiya al-Lunaniya: Mu'ayasha Shakhsiya* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 2013), pp. 562-576.
- 18 See Tanios Gerges Chehwan, *Intifadat al-Istiqlal, Mukhayam Sahat al-Huriya* (Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 2012).
- 19 See Reinoud Leenders, *Spoils of Truce: Corruption and State-Building in Postwar Lebanon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

Part I

Introduction

1

Situating the Breakdown

Measured by any standard, regional or international, Lebanon is a complex country to understand, let alone to study – whether in times of peace or war. In comparison with other conflicts involving large scale military confrontations, the war in Lebanon involved a comparatively large number of internal and external parties as well as various state and non-state actors. It was also a war that underwent continuous change.

The constantly changing internal and external setting of conflict makes it difficult to characterise Lebanon's war. Was it a classic civil war in which protagonists fought over well-defined objectives, or an internal war serving as an avenue to settle old scores? Was it an insurgency that never took off, or a revolution that never succeeded? Was it a regional war reflecting the unsettled conflicts in the Middle East, or a broader international war involving the major powers?

In some ways, the war was none of these. In others, it was all of them. It was not just a military confrontation between two hostile groups, but a conflict of communities, ideologies, religions, power politics, parochial interests, and values. It was infused with passion and blurred by extremism and political expediency. To the extent that conflict sprang from an incompatible blend of values, beliefs, and interests, the war had a distinctly Levantine flavour. The stakes were high for all parties, Lebanese and non-Lebanese alike. The problems were deep and intractable; the disillusionments real. And there was resistance: minorities battled majorities, repressive regimes battled each other, a revolution battled its detractors, while shallow ideologies competed for an audience to impress.

Within such a context, no one-dimensional analysis can account for the multidimensional sources of stability, change and conflict in Lebanon. Historically, no victory was complete, no revolt was finished, and no order was orderly. Instead, ambivalence predominated both in times of peace and war.

In understanding the conflict in Lebanon, it is not only what one writes that is important, but when the writing takes place. The timing of any coverage of the war is as important as its content, for actors, objectives, and perceptions of conflict in Lebanon have been in constant flux. Unlike other countries that have experienced violent protracted conflict, where divisions were clear-cut and where the parties to the conflict were clearly defined,¹ in Lebanon enemies and targets continued to change as did the objectives of the protagonists.

In pre-war Lebanon, political debate centred on a particular set of issues identified with particular groups. During the 1975–76 war, a different set of issues emerged. After 1976, the subsequent phases of the war involved new participants, both Lebanese and non-Lebanese, and new political agendas, both internal and regional.

Situating the Study

The objective of this study is to identify and explain the elements and process of breakdown of the Lebanese state in the period beginning in the late 1960s and ending in the first two years of the war in 1975–76. It addresses the causes, nature, and process of change which culminated in the eruption of warfare in 1975.

The period that preceded the cut-off point of the late 1960s is of no direct relevance to the conflicts that characterised the political scene in the period leading up to the collapse of state institutions in 1975–76. Just as developments occurring in the second half of the 1950s, particularly regional politics after the 1956 Suez War, had a direct bearing on the course of events in Lebanon and culminated in the 1958 crisis, developments beginning in 1967–68 had a direct bearing on the breakdown in the mid-1970s.

Events prior to 1967–68, occurring either immediately before that date in the 1960s or at earlier periods, help explain the workings of the political system and the nature of communal relations. They are, however, of secondary relevance and of limited use in explaining the process of breakdown since the late 1960s. They help identify the dynamics of the political system, its weakness as well as its strength, but offer little explanation of why and how it failed to contain conflict, beginning in the late 1960s. The pre-1967 political scene is covered in the study as part of the discussion of the historical and political background prior to the turning point of 1968–69 and in relation to the nature of confessional politics both in crisis and non-crisis situations.

Beginning in the late 1960s, the internal dimension of political and communal differences changed both in intensity and in substance. But the external dimension of conflict, hinging on the PLO armed presence in the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, was a new development not only in the context of Lebanese politics but also in broader regional politics. In this light, the turning point of the late 1960s is of decisive importance, particularly in relation to the external dimension of the breakdown.

The reasons for ending the study in 1976 are the following. First, the military confrontations in 1975–76 were the culmination of the political

crises and armed conflicts, which began in the late 1960s. The disputes that separated the protagonists in 1975–76 were no different from those prior to 1975. Second, military confrontations in 1975–76 were more spontaneous and less organised than those that followed in the 1970s and 1980s. Conflict after 1976 became institutionalised. The interests of the warring factions were better served by keeping the country in a state of war, which became a lucrative business. By contrast, in 1975–76 many people took part in the war because they felt threatened or because they believed in a cause worth fighting for. After 1976, militias became organised and fighters were trained and paid to perform military duties as full-time soldiers. That was not the case in 1975–76.

Third, after 1976 no military confrontations took place for over a year, but beginning in mid-1978, the nature and scope of the war changed. At the regional level, Syria had become involved in the war not only as a supporter of one group or another, but as a party to the conflict. The PLO was in control of one part of Lebanon and was deeply entrenched in the country both politically and militarily. Furthermore, the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict was radically altered following the negotiations between Egypt and Israel, which culminated in the Camp David Accord in 1979. In short, the regional considerations that took shape after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and affected the state of affairs in Lebanon, the PLO, Syria, and Israel, underwent structural change in the second half of the 1970s.

Fourth, the internal scene was also significantly changed: Kamal Jumblatt, the main Lebanese ally of the PLO and the influential leader of the opposition to Damascus in 1976, was assassinated in March 1977. Bashir Gemayel and a new generation of militant Christian leaders were now in the ascendant. In addition, the Shia cleric Musa al-Sadr and the repercussions of his disappearance while on a visit to Libya in August 1978 made an impact on Shia communal politics and, by extension, on Lebanon.

Finally, the Israeli invasion in 1982 and subsequent developments – the withdrawal of the PLO from Lebanon, the failure of the Lebanese-Israeli accord of 17 May 1983, the bombing of the American and French forces in Beirut, Iran's direct involvement in the war and the emergence of Hizbollah – produced internal and regional conflicts which had little resemblance to the disputes associated with the war in 1975–76.

Phases and Dimensions of the Breakdown The question we pose in the study is twofold: why did the state in Lebanon break down in the first half of the 1970s, and how did the breakdown take place? The first part of the question deals with the causes, nature, and elements of breakdown, the second deals with the process of breakdown.² The patterned and sequential character of the breakdown will be analysed through its various phases of disintegration which culminated in the war in 1975–76. An attempt will be made to analyse the dynamic process of breakdown as opposed to the static which emphasises the social, economic and cultural features of regimes at a given point in time.

Three phases characterise the breakdown of the state in Lebanon. First, the erosion and eventual loss of power; second, the political paralysis and power vacuum; third, the collapse of state institutions and the eruption of violence. In each phase the factors that influenced the behaviour of individual and institutional actors involved, either directly or indirectly, in the breakdown will be focused on.

In a small country like Lebanon, the roles of individual actors, that is, the political elites and the counter-elites, in and outside government, are as important as systems and institutional actors in explaining how the political system works, particularly in times of crisis. The actions, values, choices, and skills of political leaders are crucial for stability in divided societies in circumstances devoid of conflict, let alone in crisis situations.

Moreover, the breakdown of the 1970s had specific features. One of them was the concurrence of internal unrest and external destabilisation. There is, therefore, a need to determine which aspect of conflict was predominant

and to explore the linkage between the internal and external dimensions of conflict associated with the breakdown.

Another question concerns the problem of defining the boundaries of the state and, more important, of the nation. In Lebanon there is controversy over the nature of the state as well as over national identity. To the extent that communities approximate the visions, perceptions and objectives of national groups, Lebanon is to a certain degree a multinational, or more accurately a multicommunal state. This in turn raises the question of legitimacy and, by extension, the effectiveness of the political system in situations of crisis, particularly when consensus among communal leaders is lacking. The problem is compounded by the fact that the 'nation' in Lebanon takes on a regional ideological and political dimension, at least for part of Lebanese society, thus feeding loyalties which transcend state boundaries.

This brings us to the central question addressed in the study: can an open and democratic state in Lebanon survive and preserve its character in crisis situations involving contested issues related to pan-Arab politics while interacting with a regional system composed of states that lack both democracy and openness? The problem here hinges on the relationship between state and society.³ Three questions become pertinent in this connection. Which one has supremacy over the other? How does this relate to regime stability in crisis situations? And what impact does this have in crises involving regional actors having varying kinds of relationships between state and society?

In most developing countries the difficulty of striking a balance between state and society has posed a major threat to democracy.⁴ In Lebanon, however, the balance was always skewed in favour of society, partly because of the historical evolution of communal and state institutions prior to and after the formation of the modern state in 1920, and partly because of the plural make-up of society.

The predominance of society over state gave Lebanon much of its pre-war democratic character and facilitated the functioning of political institutions in non-crisis situations, particularly when issues of dispute were confined to domestic politics. But although this characteristic may be an asset in

conflict-free times, it can become a liability in crises involving regional actors, as was the case since the late 1960s.

How can we explain this? In times of crisis, when options are limited and the system's capacity to absorb shocks is diminishing, and when disputes involve external state and non-state actors with closed and authoritarian systems, Lebanon's open system becomes a source of weakness and, by extension, a liability for stability. In such circumstances the Lebanese state is forced into a competition with more powerful states and, by extension, its relative weakness vis-à-vis other regional states becomes a handicap in regional power politics. This is because, as will be explained later, it lacks those instruments of control that are at the disposal of other Arab states, and is unable to cope with such pressures without endangering the open and democratic character of the system.

The Breakdown in Comparative Perspective The fluid nature of political conflict and military confrontations is due in part to the complexity of conflict and lack of agreement among Lebanese groups. It is also due to the absence of a central driving force behind conflict. In other situations, the state is either the central arena for conflict or the force behind conflict. It performs a dual role: defensive, when attacked by the opposition, and offensive, when it targets the opposition.

In Lebanon, however, that was not the case. In crisis situations from the late 1960s, the state was neutralised politically and militarily. And as the war progressed, the state was not only marginal to conflict, it was not even a party to it. The state was targeted by internal and external parties, though for different reasons and in pursuit of different objectives. At this point the question is: why were all parties successful in undermining the state? Why

was the Lebanese state unable to uphold its prerogatives and preserve its monopoly over the instruments of legitimate coercion like all states do?

In comparison with states in other Third World countries, the state in Lebanon has had a different path to power. While most other states in the post-independence era have gained power and increased autonomy from society, the state in Lebanon has moved against the current. This became all the more visible because the state in Lebanon had to interact with the Arab state system. And as Arab states became increasingly authoritarian following the rise of military regimes in the 1950s and 1960s, the Lebanese state became more vulnerable to external pressure.

Several interpretations have been put forward to explain the weakness of the Lebanese state, and later the causes of its collapse in the mid-1970s. One relates crises in Lebanon to the growing imbalance between loads and capabilities on the political system.⁵ Another explanation attributes the war to the divisive forces inherent in Lebanon's confessional political system.⁶ A third stresses that the war was due to the increasing socio-economic inequalities along sectarian, class, and regional lines.⁷ A fourth links the breakdown to government inefficiency, nepotism, and corruption.⁸

Notwithstanding the limited explanatory value of the above-mentioned factors, none of these problems was unique to Lebanon. Most developing countries have had to grapple with similar if not deeper problems but did not end up with the kinds of conflicts and wars that beset Lebanon.

To explain the nature of the breakdown one need not ask whether Lebanon was divided, or whether the system was precarious. Sectarian fragmentation in Lebanon is a given and so is the precarious nature of the political system. Lebanese society did not suddenly become confessional in the first half of the 1970s, nor did the system suddenly become fragile prior to the outbreak of war. But another equally important given regarding pre-war Lebanon is that the avenues for gradual political change and reforms were not blocked.⁹

The starting point in our assessment of what went wrong in the period 1967-76 is that Lebanon is a divided society not immune to conflict. But the questions to ask are these: (i) When and how divisions in Lebanese society lead to conflict? (ii) What is the nature and intensity of conflict? Is it political, military or both? (iii) When and how would conflict result in a full-

fledged war? (iv) What kind of war (internal, external, or both), and who are the participants in the war? (v) Why and how did war end in 1976?

The following questions highlight the multifaceted nature of the breakdown in the period 1967–76 both in its internal and external dimensions:

1. Was the state bound to fail only because society lacked homogeneity and because Lebanon did not have a political system similar to that of stable Western democracies?
2. Why did the breakdown not take place at an earlier or later date? How does one account for the timing of the war if forces of disintegration have always existed, and if the system is inherently deficient? How does one account for periods of orderly politics prior to the 1970s? Why, for example, did conflict in 1958 last fewer than six months while the conflict that began in 1975 dragged on for several years?
3. How does one explain the occurrence of armed conflict at a time when Lebanon had a functioning electoral process: presidents were elected every six years and parliaments were changed through relatively orderly elections every four? Elections in Lebanon did make a difference and led, in some instances, to change by ending political eras and unseating established politicians. President Frangiyeh's election in 1970 by a margin of one vote ended the Chehabist era (1958–70) and its support base in the army.
4. Was the outbreak of war in April 1975 the culmination of a process of internal change and/or a major turning point in Palestinian–Lebanese relations which, in turn, reflected change in the Arab–Israeli conflict? Were sectarian relations reaching the breaking point even in the absence of external military and political interventions?
5. To what extent would a secular (non-confessional) political order in Lebanon – assuming that hypothetically it was possible – have contributed to stability while insulating the country from destabilising regional turmoil? How different would the handling of a secular political system be of externally-generated problems, such as the post-1967 PLO?
6. Would political and socio-economic reforms, notably those identified with Chehabism, have been sufficient to shield the state against the destabilising internal and external forces in the 1970s? Had the

- Chehabist model of modernisation been continued, could PLO-Lebanese confrontations and, subsequently, the war have been prevented?
7. Since Lebanon was not the only divided society in the Arab world, and was not the only country having to deal with externally-generated problems, why did the state in Lebanon fail while other states succeeded? Why, for example, was Jordan – facing a mobilised Palestinian revolutionary movement at the same time as Lebanon – able to overcome the challenge while the Lebanese state failed?
 8. How does one explain the absence of direct international involvement, particularly by the major powers, in the 1975–76 war? Why, in other words, did conflict remain essentially an internal and regional affair?
 9. What happened to the disputes of the 1970s between Left and Right, Christians and Muslims when fighting stopped by the end of 1976? Why was another ‘double negation’ formula, similar to those of 1943 and 1958, not possible in the mid-1970s?

These questions will be addressed in the following chapters as we cover the process of breakdown which culminated in the war. But first, a few remarks are necessary about the study of Lebanon in crisis situations.

The Study of Lebanon in Crisis Situations The following remarks will help situate the study in comparative perspective. First, there are two ways to assess the performance of the pre-war Lebanese political system in crisis situations. One attributes the breakdown to causes inherent in Lebanese society and the political system. According to this reading, Lebanon has lived on borrowed time and was bound to fail because it was divided along confessional lines. However, it does not tell us why other divided societies with unstable political systems have not

failed and become the scene of protracted armed conflict. Nor does it explain why homogeneous societies were also the scene of internal conflict. More important, it does not explain the timing and nature of the breakdown. The other approach adopted in this book is to relate the breakdown to specific internal and external factors and to particular developments which paralysed the political process, undermined state institutions, and finally resulted in warfare.

Second, the approach taken in this book recognises that the pre-war confessional system, despite its shortcomings, was able to function relatively well.¹⁰ It faced one serious crisis in 1958, but it was of short duration and was contained successfully. Other crises involving the resignation of President Bechara al-Khoury in the face of an inter-sectarian opposition in 1952, the aborted coup d'état by the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in December 1961 were ephemeral. Unlike the 1975–76 war, they were contained events, and did not give rise to any significant sectarian animosity. We also recognise that crises in Lebanon have provided an impetus for the initiation of reformist measures, specifically during the Chehab regime in the aftermath of the 1958 crisis. Although the momentum for reforms was brought to a halt few years later, the system has shown a certain degree of flexibility which has enabled it to defuse communal tensions and adapt – though inadequately – to growing political and social demands.

The third remark has to do with the nature of conflict in the 1970s and its relevance to the war. In crisis situations the distinction between the magnitude and significance of internally and externally generated crises takes on a particular importance. Lebanon's internal problems, whether political or socio-economic, either before or after the first half of the 1970s,

were no different from problems encountered by many countries, particularly in the Third World.

Where Lebanon's problems do differ is in the nature and scope of externally generated problems originating mainly from its regional order – specifically the Arab state system and post-1967 PLO. Arab nationalism in its multiple political and ideological variants, beginning with the downfall of the Ottoman Empire, has distinguished inter-Arab politics from inter-state politics in other regional systems. 'Why the idea of unity is so strong among Arabs – so much more than among Latin Americans, for instance, or the English-speaking nations,' writes Malcolm Kerr, 'is a mystery that neither Arab nor Western historians have satisfactorily explained.'¹¹ The post-1967 PLO was another source of instability in regional politics. In no other regional system since the Second World War was there a militant nationalist movement similar to the Palestinian or a conflict similar to the Arab–Israeli–Palestinian conflict. It predated the Cold War, led to five major wars, and did not end with the ending of the Cold War.

Another remark concerns the standards by which to assess the performance of the Lebanese political system. Which standards apply best to pre-war Lebanon, and where do we situate Lebanon on the political development scale? Lebanon's democracy once compared favourably with that of many other countries, including most Middle Eastern countries, but fell short of the standards of Western-type democracy. By Western standards, Lebanon was a case of political underdevelopment. By other standards, however, Lebanon compared positively.

Lebanon received attention from the academic community in the 1960s and 1970s at a time when expectations of evolutionary change were high.¹² Even change by way of revolution was cast in positive terms. For some observers, traditional societies were passing¹³ and hopes were pinned on a new elite drawn from the ranks of the people who would be more in tune with people's demands and aspirations than the traditional elite of the pre-independence period.

The 1960s and 1970s were a time for radical change in Arab politics. With the eclipse of Nasserism after 1967 new symbols and leaders appeared: Arafat's leadership of the PLO, the Ba'thist regimes in Iraq and Syria, Libya's Qaddafi, then regarded as the new Nasser, and the New Arab Left.

It was during this period Lebanon's destabilisation began. At the beginning of the period, Lebanon's moderate and pragmatic confessional politics differed from the radicalism and revolutionary politics of other Arab regimes. It did not take long for the leaders and regimes of that period to fall into disgrace. By that time, Lebanon was in the throws of a destructive war.

We should add that the academic community has only recently discovered the merits of civil society.¹⁴ Lebanon's vibrant civil society was given little attention in the prevalent political and academic discourse of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁵ Those attributes of political life that counted most in the Arab world both for the rulers and the ruled – authoritarian states, ideological politics, maximalism – were missing in pre-war Lebanon. What pre-war Lebanon had to offer did not fit well with the norms of that period. Lebanon's pluralism, democracy and civil society were in this context signs of weakness for some and reactionary politics for others. The weak Lebanese state was no match with the vitality of strong, progressive Arab states. By the standards of the 1970s, Lebanon's characteristics were de-emphasised and the criteria used to assess the performance of the political system were remarkably stringent. This is also reflected in the academic debate over the political system in the pre-war period, discussed in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 The nature of conflict in divided countries like Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, and recently the former Yugoslavia is well-defined. Participants in the conflict and the issues of dispute underwent limited change throughout these conflicts in comparison with the changes that marked the war in Lebanon.
- 2 For a comparative theoretical account, see Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan (eds), *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibrium* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). Also by the same authors, *The Breakdown of Regimes: Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).
- 3 See, for example, John Keane, *Civil Society and the State* (London: Verso Press, 1988); Ernest Gellner, 'Civil Society in Historical Perspective', *International Social Science Journal* 43 (August, 1991): 495–510.
- 4 See, for example, Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Seymour Lipset (eds) *Democracy in Developing Countries: Asia* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989). See also Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (eds) *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
- 5 See Michael C. Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon*, Preface to the encore edition (Boulder: Westview Encore Edition, 1985): XIII–XVIII. See also Michael C. Hudson, 'The Problem of Authoritative Power in Lebanese Politics: Why Consociationalism Failed', in Nadim Shehadi and Dana Haffar Mills (eds), *Lebanon: a History of Conflict and Consensus* (London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Tauris, 1988): 224–39.
- 6 See, for example, Halim Barakat, 'The Social Context' in P. Edward Haley and Lewis W. Snider (eds), *Lebanon in Crisis: Participants and Issues* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979): 3–20.
- 7 See, for example, Tabitha Petran, *The Struggle Over Lebanon* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987); B. J. Odeh, *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*. (London: Zed Books, 1985), Samih K. Farsoun and Walker Carroll, 'The Civil War in Lebanon: Sect, Class and Imperialism', *Monthly Review* 28 (1976): 12–37.
- 8 See, for example, Michael C. Hudson, 'The Lebanese Crisis: The Limits of Consociational Democracy', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 5, no. 3–4 (1976): 109–22.
- 9 See Iliya F. Harik 'Voting Behaviour, Lebanon', in Landau, Ozbudun and Tachau (eds), *Electoral Politics in the Middle East* (London: Croom Helm, 1980): 145–71. See also Michael C. Hudson, 'The Electoral Process and Political Development in Lebanon', *Middle East Journal* 20 (Spring 1966): 173–86.
- 10 See Iliya F. Harik, 'The Ethnic Revolution and Political Integration in the Middle East', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3 (July 1972): 313–23.
- 11 Malcolm H. Kerr, *The Arab Cold War, Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958–1970* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971): 1.
- 12 See, for example, Manfred Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962).
- 13 See, for example, Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society Modernizing the Middle East* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1958). For a critique of modernisation theory as applied to Lebanon, see Samir Khalaf, *Lebanon's Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987): 1–21.

- 14 See, for example, Edward Shils, 'The Virtue of Civil Society', *Government and Opposition*, 26, 1 (Winter 1992): 3–20.
- 15 Even an important recent work on civil society in the Middle East which covered several countries, including those which have limited experience in democracy and pluralism, did not include Lebanon. Augustus Richard Norton (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East* Vol. One and Two (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995 and 1996).

2

The Shortcomings of the Lebanese System in the Pre-War Period

The Academic Debate

A number of arguments have been put forward to explain the failure of the Lebanese system which emphasise internal and external factors. While these explanations reflect divergent views on pre-and post-war Lebanon, our emphasis will be on major works written prior to the outbreak of war in 1975, for they deal with the political system from the standpoint of pre-war Lebanon. After the outbreak of war, Lebanon became a different polity and the pre-war political system ceased to function. Studies dealing with the war years are numerous. While some are narrative and analytical in content,¹ others are journalistic.²

Pre-war Lebanon commanded the attention of a number of scholars, and was the subject of comparative analysis in the political science literature. The most notable studies include two works written in the mid-1960s: Michael Hudson's *The Precarious Republic*,³ and a collection of essays edited by Leonard Binder entitled *Politics in Lebanon*.⁴ A third, comparative work on Lebanon and Ghana, *The Politics of Pluralism*, was written in the mid-1970s by David and Audrey Smock.⁵ Other important

works on modern pre-war Lebanon are either historical in focus or monographs dealing with specific aspects of Lebanese politics and society.⁶

While the studies that examine the workings of the political system are comparative in nature, they differ in terms of the standards by which Lebanon's political system was assessed. Michael Hudson's modernisation approach, based on Karl Deutsch's theory of social mobilisation,⁷ places Lebanon in the context of the general processes of political development that have marked Western societies. From this viewpoint, Lebanon is regarded as 'politically underdeveloped' because its political institutions (e.g., the governing process, the electoral system, political parties) do not operate in ways similar to those present in stable democratic societies. By contrast, the Smocks as well as the contributors to Binder's volume examine the workings of the Lebanese system without relying on one particular framework of analysis.

In the Binder volume, Lebanon is viewed as a developing country with deficiencies as well as positive attributes. In the words of Edward Shils:

Contemporary Lebanon appears to be a happy phenomenon, unique in the Third World, a prosperous liberal country. It has a parliamentary body ... Elections are conducted with a minimum of violence ... Lebanon enjoys freedom of association and freedom of expression ... People do not disappear in the night, their families ignorant of where they have been taken by the police ... Yet this account of the situation in Lebanon does not tell the whole truth ... Lebanon is not a civil society. It has many of the requisite qualities, but it lacks the essential one: the politically relevant members of Lebanese society are not inclined to allow the obligations, which arise from the membership in the society, to supervene when they feel that interests which they regard as vital are threatened.⁸

This description reflected the 'mood of hesitant optimism' towards Lebanon, as Albert Hourani put it.⁹ For the contributors, Lebanon seemed to have made some headway towards development, but still lacked many attributes of a civil and stable polity. While it was not regarded as a hopelessly stalled polity, Lebanon was not always seen as moving in the right direction, not only because of internal impediments, but also because of external factors. As Malcolm Kerr noted, 'confessional democracy will

collapse if outside pressures makes it impossible for politicians to compromise'.¹⁰

By and large, the contributors detected a 'static equilibrium' which pervaded Lebanese politics. But they did not rule out the possibility of positive adjustment and adaptation. Indeed, Lebanon was viewed as heading towards orderly change. This was in part because the benchmarks by which the system's performance was judged did not derive from particular models of political development. Lebanon was not regarded as doomed because it had failed to develop the kind of institutions that brought democratic stability to the West. In Binder's words: Lebanese democracy, like any other historical democracy, is not a system meant to be operated by supermen. Destiny stubbornly refuses to guarantee to consistently replenish any community's stock of superior leaders ... The basis on which a democracy should be judged is its ability to resolve the great problems facing the society as a whole.¹¹ They [the Lebanese] recognise that certain differences can never be satisfactorily resolved, so one had best make believe those differences did not exist. Thus, instead of utilising political institutions to resolve conflicts, the problem is to prevent fundamental conflict over ideological issues from destroying Lebanese political institutions.¹²

In this reading, Lebanon was seen to have managed to survive, but it had to adapt more effectively to its changing internal and external environments; and above all, it ought to be given a chance.

In their comparative study of the politics of pluralism in Lebanon and Ghana, the Smocks viewed Lebanon's fragmentation as a given, and as such the country tried to cope with the imperatives of historical development and social change. The norms by which Lebanon's political institutions and its approach to national accommodation were assessed were not absolute. Lebanon was viewed as a society in perpetual movement. In this way, the evolutionary process, which characterised the development of its political institutions, was considered suitable for the country's communal structure. Lebanon's achievements were not regarded as cost-free, but the authors argued that the momentum for change in the appropriate direction was there. 'The full and open recognition of deep communal cleavages' in Lebanon, write the Smocks 'has often promoted more harmonious social

patterns than their minimisation. Lebanese sensitivity to the implications of strained communal relations, a struggle to achieve inter-group accommodation, and a will to live together as members of a common national society, have produced an atmosphere conducive to greater political stability and increasing attitudinal convergence.’¹³

By contrast, Ghana’s forced integration approach did not lessen the degree of communal identifications, nor did it reduce potential communal conflict. As the authors conclude: The experience of Lebanon and Ghana attest to the strength and tenacity of communal affiliations in plural political systems ... Since communalism rests on man’s fundamental needs for identity and security, it will resist efforts to be eradicated ... Attempting to hide or to deny the existence of communal identities merely postpones the day when the problems posed by communalism can come to be managed more successfully.¹⁴

In the authors’ view, confessionalism did not necessarily constitute an obstacle preventing the emergence of an orderly political system. In fact, the authors assert that ‘it may be preferable that Lebanon and other fragmented states do not become completely integrated, since their rising nationalism is a much tempered form of the emotional fervour that has inspired so many historical excesses in the name of the national interest’.¹⁵ Despite the negative aspects of the rigid structure of confessional politics which did not enable the system to respond adequately to change – something which the authors did not fail to underline¹⁶ – ‘the relative stability of the political system in Lebanon, the growth in support for the system, the increase in attachment to the national community and its economic prosperity, all attest to the benefits that the maintenance of confessional balance and reconciliation has helped accrue in Lebanon.’¹⁷

Contrary to the Smocks’ comparative approach to Lebanon’s politics, Michael Hudson studied Lebanon from the standpoint of modernisation. While both Hudson and the Smocks recognise the costs and benefits of the Lebanese confessional system, Hudson questions the capability of the system to adapt to internal and external pressures. By comparing Lebanon’s socio-economic and demographic indicators with those of other countries, Hudson declares Lebanon a case of ‘political underdevelopment’, because it fails to conform to the pattern of development in countries of similar socio-

economic status. As a result, Lebanon is found to be a 'deviant' case defying categorisation,¹⁸ hence the 'puzzling' nature of the Lebanese case, as described in *The Precarious Republic*.

In this important book, Hudson begins by expressing his astonishment at Lebanon's ability to modernise while maintaining a degree of internal cohesion. In his words: 'if the system is so defective, its apparent success over two decades is puzzling ... The Lebanese experience illustrates both the surprising possibilities for modernisation in a deeply divided political culture and the strains that such a process imposes on the political system.'¹⁹ Hudson goes on to observe that Lebanon's relatively advanced social and economic modernisation (demographic, economic trends, exposure to modernity) do not match the level of its political modernisation.

This uneven modernisation results in a political dilemma accentuated not only by the burdens of social mobilisation, but more importantly by the lack of adequate institutions able to deal effectively with internal and external problems while promoting national integration. Integration, writes Hudson, 'requires the maintenance of an intricate balance among competing interests, parochial and foreign. Social mobilisation imposes additional burdens on the entire political system ... These two conditions are mutually reinforcing and thus their politically dysfunctional effects are amplified.'²⁰

Having stated that the Lebanese system is ill-equipped to handle the demands it faces while avoiding institutional and political immobilism, Hudson argues that the fundamental flaw in the system stems from the contradictory forces of system maintenance and adaptation to social change. The paradox is also apparent in Lebanon's institutional performance. Indeed, 'the secret of [the Lebanese political] system's precarious survival is its very institutional weakness'.²¹ Lebanon has 'avoided the perils of complete immobilism and destructive dynamism ... partly because its representative institutions function but do not function well'.²²

Although the system 'has developed an important measure of flexibility and complexity,' writes Hudson, 'it cannot survive merely on the 'creative exploration of its defects.'²³ What the author would like to see is the development of political institutions that can withstand the strains of social mobilisation and the demands of political representation. For in the absence

of such stabilising mechanisms, the 'loads' on the system may increase faster than its 'capabilities'.

In his words:

Lebanon's historic problems are not disappearing. Parochialism if anything is aggravated by social change. The prospects for domestic prosperity and tranquillity are dubious in the light of demographic trends and a weak productive sector. Radicalism, partially a function of continuing ferment in the Arab world as a whole, finds no legitimate place in Lebanese politics; and the system has failed to develop a responsible leftist opposition. Despite the National Pact, Arab nationalism and regional rivalries continue to pose a certain threat to the Lebanese entity, and Great Power competition continues to involve the people in the area. Lebanon is too strategically situated to escape embroilment in these conflicts. At the risk of underestimating Lebanese ingenuity, it must be concluded that the republic's political future will be stormy.²⁴

Needless to say, Lebanon's future was indeed stormy. Less than a decade after Hudson wrote these lines, Lebanon became engulfed in a devastating war. But the question to ask is whether or not the war was the result of the various flaws in the system that Hudson outlined. Put differently, would it have been possible to prevent political crises and violent conflicts, notably the war in the mid-1970s, had Lebanon followed Hudson's prescriptions and developed a political system which was capable of coping with the internal and external loads placed upon it?

While the eradication of parochialism and the adjustment to the destabilising forces of social mobilisation through the development of proper political institutions could have enhanced system legitimacy and strengthened national integration, as Hudson rightly argued, there was no mechanism by which Lebanon could have been less 'strategically situated' in its regional order to escape embroilment in externally-generated conflicts. The regional political scene was simply beyond Lebanon's control. Although Hudson does not exclude the external dimension of conflict, which magnifies Lebanon's political vulnerability, his frame of reference is mainly confined to the country's domestic political and institutional setting.

In Hudson's assessment of Lebanon's political system, two broad issues are of central importance. One is to explain the nature of Lebanon's 'political underdevelopment' and the workings of its unusual confessional system; the other is to determine the conditions for change that would put Lebanon on the proper course of development that characterised other developed societies. For Hudson, the Lebanese system is deficient mainly because it is confessional. Thus Lebanon's confessional democracy and system-balancing mechanisms become a built-in obstacle to the building of a more developed order that would suit the norms of political development. In this way, Lebanon ceases to be a deviant polity only when it conforms with the modernisation process that gave rise to the kind of homogeneous, democratic, stable politics that characterised industrial Western societies.

The other issue implicit in Hudson's analysis is that change would ultimately lead to a better political order simply because it did in other systems. Evolutionary change will eventually transform a 'traditional' society into a 'modern' one. This assumption, which is at the root of modernisation theory, is reflected in the works of Karl Deutsch and Daniel Lerner among others.²⁵

In reality, from the standpoint of modernisation theory, almost everything in Lebanon should look awkward: parochial and sectarian politics coexisting with the most progressive and secular political parties in the Arab world; a country that produced 'feudal socialist'²⁶ leaders like Kamal Jumblatt; a country that managed to survive for a number of years by making good use of its internal contradictions; and an open and free polity in a region ruled by authoritarian regimes. Not surprisingly, a political scientist studying Lebanon from the vantage point of social mobilisation would declare Lebanon an anomaly in the world system. Had Lebanon been either an authoritarian polity (like many Third World countries in the 1950s and 1960s) or a Western type democracy, social indicators would have made more sense. Lebanon would then fit better in a particular framework and, as a result, would no longer be a deviant case.

Notwithstanding Lebanon's unique features, its peculiar standing is due less to its deviance from a specific theoretical model than to factors linked to the particularities of Lebanon's historical and communal development. Here lies the central problem in Hudson's approach, for it fails to explain

the causes of political instability and periodic crises as well as the occurrence of conflicts of the magnitude and duration of those witnessed in post-1975 Lebanon.

Nor does the social mobilisation approach help explain the nature of conflict in divided societies such as Yemen in the first half of the 1960s, Cyprus in 1974 and Yugoslavia in the 1990s, which, like Lebanon, have experienced social change though in varying degrees, and have come under direct external intervention. What then are the factors which account for conflict in divided societies, and at what point and under what circumstances do they drive people to resort to violence to settle their differences?

While the modernisation approach helps detect the flaws in the system, it does not offer adequate explanations for the causes. This is largely because socio-economic data and analyses cannot always be linked to the actual issues central to the conflict. In this way, one can argue that Lebanon is a 'precarious republic', but it is difficult to relate the 'variables' used to demonstrate the precarious nature of the political system to the causes of any possible breakdown.

Lebanon's Pre-war Crises: 1952 and 1958

Hudson's own analysis of the 1952 and 1958 crises in Lebanon is illustrative of the limited explanatory value of the modernisation approach in conflict situations. In 1952, President Bechara al-Khoury was forced to resign in the face of an intersectarian opposition despite the fact that his supporters formed a majority in the parliament. He was succeeded by another elected civilian president. The election was conducted under the supervision of the army commander Fouad Chehab, who assumed the premiership for the interim period.

This orderly and bloodless transition made within the provisions of constitutional government – at a time when Syria, for example, which gained independence at the same time with Lebanon, was in the early 1950s experiencing its third military coup – was regarded by Hudson as an indication of Lebanon's deficient political system. In his words:

The 1952 crisis shows that the Lebanese system ... had failed to provide strong leadership and it had failed to institutionalise a responsible opposition. This incapacity was visible at three levels. First, the parliamentary and the presidential electoral processes lacked legitimacy because formal channels were obstructed by clique politics. Second, the executive apparatus could not cope with the demands for vigorous, effective policies to deal with mounting national problems ... Third, both the regime and the opposition failed to manage the popular forces that were drawn into the struggle.²⁷

Had a coup occurred in 1952 – not uncommon in the Arab world in the 1950s – how would we account for it? There is little doubt that the crisis in 1952 was the first serious internal crisis since independence, as explained by Hudson; but could it be attributed to the failure to provide strong leadership and institutionalise a responsible opposition? Only a decade after independence, crises could not be ruled out, government institutions were not immune to breakdown, and clique politics were not going to disappear. But the interesting aspect of the 1952 crisis was that it was of short duration and was ended peacefully within the existing framework of government institutions. Violence was avoided by the resignation of the president and by a peaceful transition of power through elections. In comparison with crises in Third World countries, including Arab countries, which occurred less than a decade after independence, Lebanon was successful in handling such a transition. Indeed, the 1952 crisis was well handled both by the regime and the opposition and the system proved it was capable of absorbing its first major post-independence political disturbance.

Of greater significance was the fact that the 1952 crisis had little to do with the destabilising forces of social mobilisation. Mostly political in nature, stemming from the corrupt policies, declining popularity and shrinking power base of the Khoury regime, the 1952 crisis could not be attributed to the process of social mobilisation.²⁸ In the end, it was the success of the opposition in mobilising public opinion that led to the fall of the regime while leaving the political system intact. Neither socio-economic differences nor urbanisation, nor any other factors associated with modernisation and change played any significant role in the initiation or ending of this brief crisis.

The crisis in 1958, though different in intensity and duration from that of 1952, was also only marginally linked to the negative repercussions of social mobilisation. While the two crises sprang from a somewhat similar internal source, the 1958 crisis had a concrete external dimension. In Hudson's account, the 1958 crisis was not only the result of one major internal stress involving President Chamoun's attempts 'to strengthen his own powers', it was also internationalised. 'Lebanese domestic politics,' writes Hudson, 'was a function of the post-Suez ferment in the Arab world, and Lebanon became an object of Cold War rivalry.'²⁹ He then writes that 'the 1958 crisis illustrates Lebanon's persistent problems of parochialism and foreign entanglement. It also shows that the complex effects of social mobilisation make the stability of the formal political structures more and more precarious.'³⁰

Viewed in a broader regional perspective, the 1958 crisis was not an isolated case of breakdown. Other Arab countries witnessed crises following the emergence of Nasserism in pan-Arab politics. How would one explain the crisis of governability in Syria, a country deeply divided along ideological-cum-parochial lines?³¹ Also, how would one account for the internal turmoil in Jordan in 1957 and the overthrow of the monarchy in Iraq in 1958 which coincided with the Lebanese crisis? And how would one explain the eruption of sectarian hostilities in 1958, not so much during the crisis, but when Chamoun's presidential term was over and President Chehab had been elected?

In his concluding remarks on the 1958 crisis, Hudson notes that 'the same forces that drive the president to expand his power drive his rivals to expand theirs. Institutionalised sectarianism is Lebanon's substitute for positive consensus, but at the same time it is a great barrier to Lebanon's political modernisation.'³² Once again, Hudson's observations make sense from a modernisation standpoint, but do not provide an adequate explanation for the causes of violent conflict and breakdown in 1958. Nor does his account explain the timing, scope, or the way in which the crisis was terminated. The crisis ended only when a political arrangement involving internal and external actors was reached rather than because problems linked to social mobilisation were settled.

Moreover, the outcome of the 1958 crisis was not all negative. As Iliya Harik explained, it: has contributed to the system considerably ... In the first place, it has proved instructive to leaders and citizens in terms of demonstrating to all beyond any doubt that the balance of power was fairly equally distributed in the system, and that this fact could not be easily overlooked or bypassed. Secondly, it has proved to the President of the Republic that, strong as his power may be, he rules by consensus, and once he steps outside that limit he loses his power. Thirdly, it has proved to the leaders that some among them have achieved a status of community leaders, and that they could not be thrown overboard as easily as President Sham'un tried to do in 1957. Fourthly, it has given the leaders in Lebanon a clear idea about the scope and limits of their freedom in foreign policy and with respect to the Arab world, thus leading to a moderate and almost neutral position. Finally, it has tested the commitment of citizens to a cause and involved them more deeply than ever in the political process. It has also left some unpleasant and troublesome problems too, but observers have tended to see the irritating aspects rather than the positive ones.³³

Lebanon's inability to modernise politically – that is, to abolish parochialism and eradicate sectarianism, as explained by Hudson – was neither the sole cause nor the cure for the 1958 crisis. Were it not for the rise of Nasserism, which provoked drastic change in the regional balance of power, particularly after the 1956 Suez war, the crisis might not have occurred in the way that it did. Its domestic component, which revolved around opposition to Chamoun's intention to seek a second presidential term, might have surfaced, but in the absence of external factors it would have been defused in a way somewhat similar to that of 1952. In Lebanon, by contrast to Arab countries, the response was confessional rather than military or ideological, not because of any particular failure to modernise, but because the deepest political divide in Lebanon is along confessional lines. This, in turn, is due to the historical communal development of Lebanese society which gave rise to the country's confessional political institutions.

Missing in Hudson's assessment of the performance of Lebanon's political system is the historical dimension that has shaped the particular socio-political features of Lebanese society.³⁴ In fact, of all modern states in

the Middle East, Lebanon is the most rooted in history both in its communal and regional dimensions. The historical nucleus of the modern Lebanese state, namely, the *Imara* of Mount Lebanon and, after 1861, the *mutasarrifiyya* arrangement, emerged as a result of a complex interplay between internal and external change.³⁵ In this way, confessionalism could not be regarded simply as an irresponsible act on the part of the Lebanese elite. Nor was parochialism something that could be reversed by state decrees or by the forces of modernisation.

Selecting a time-frame (post-1943 Lebanon) by which the performance of the Lebanese system is assessed in a historical and regional vacuum is an exercise of limited explanatory value in times of crisis. This is because it subordinates modernisation to processes which are partially linked to the internal dynamics of a society prior to the establishment of modern state institutions. The weakness of the political development literature, Charles Tilly has written, lies in 'the treatment of each country as a separate, self-contained, more or less autonomous case'.³⁶

With the absence of a historical explanation of Lebanon's 'deviant' case, it is hardly surprising that political problems in post-independent Lebanon are attributed to a failure to modernise. This is why, in Hudson's account of the 1952 and 1958 crises, the socio-economic and demographic variables have little bearing on the political conflict both in its internal and external dimensions. As Samuel Huntington has noted, 'the problem' in the social-process approach to the study of modernisation 'concerns the links between the usual social, economic, and demographic independent variables and the political dependent ones. The problem here is the general methodological one of the causal relationship between an economic or social change ... to political changes which are normally the result of conscious human effort and will.'³⁷

The problem of the causal relationship between political and non-political change, as explained by Huntington, is apparent in *The Precarious Republic*. Therefore, socio-economic variables become of some relevance, but only after the fact; that is, in the aftermath of conflict rather than before it. Even then, one is unable to find a causal relationship between the various motives that brought together the opposition against the president,³⁸ or to explain the configuration of confessional alliances. There is no explanation,

for example, of why people were split along ideological or communal rather than socio-economic lines. Nor does the process of social mobilisation explain the awkward nature of political alliances in 1958 and the divisions between the 'loyalists' and the 'insurgents': the Syrian Social Nationalist Party and the Kataeb Party, arch-enemies who were historically, politically and ideologically opposed, were in Chamoun's camp, while the Maronite patriarch and a number of Maronite leaders were ranged against the president.

In other words, the non-political variables used in the social mobilisation approach do not explain the nature of conflict, nor do they account for its timing, intensity and duration. Rather, they are background factors and are only indirect precipitants of conflict. The situation was even more perplexing when external factors became the central force behind both the eruption of conflict and its ending, as was the case in 1958.

The most destabilising conflicts in Lebanon have involved both internal and external factors. The 1952 crisis, confined to internal developments, remained essentially a domestic affair partly because Lebanon's regional order in the early 1950s was still in the early phases of radical Arab nationalist mobilisation. Had the crisis occurred at a time of regional instability (inter-Arab and/or Arab-Israeli) it would have been influenced by external developments. Here lies the major difference between the crisis of 1952 and that of 1958.

Conflict and the Search for Optimal Modernisation In a critical reading of the three approaches to political development (system-function, social process, comparative history), Samuel Huntington identifies three problems with the social process approach: (i) the variables used reflect 'levels of development rather than rates of development', and 'the variables employed are shaped by the availability of data'; (ii) the general methodological problem of 'the causal

relationship between an economic or social change ... to political changes which are normally the result of conscious human effort and will', and (iii) the social process approach 'leaves little room for social structure and even less for political culture, political institutions and political leadership'.³⁹ Hudson's analysis of political modernisation in Lebanon exhibits the shortcomings described by Huntington.⁴⁰

One of the major problems in the social mobilisation approach has to do with the correlation between social and economic, as opposed to political, modernisation. How is it possible to determine the dynamic relationships between these various aspects of modernisation and the way in which they influence each another? Lebanon's deviation from the norm (scoring high on social and economic modernisation while being politically underdeveloped) is due in part to a failure to account for the uneven communal development of Lebanese society which began in Mount Lebanon, three centuries prior to the establishment of the modern state in 1920.⁴¹ Social mobilisation might accentuate the uneven impact of social change, but it does not create it.

Another problem has to do with the belief in the incremental process of evolutionary change and its predetermined outcome. Just as Western political institutions developed through a linear pattern of social change, Lebanon was expected to achieve the kind of political development that has characterised other developed countries. But Lebanon did not fit the theoretical mould it had been allocated. It was supposed to have become more democratic, less confessional, more institutionalised and, of course, more stable – all in a period of few decades. The system had to be able to develop all the institutional mechanisms that a 'normal' system should exhibit: namely, a strong state, democratic institutions, egalitarianism, uninhibited expansion of political participation, high elite turnover, and

above all a secular order to replace confessionalism – all the great virtues of contemporary Western democratic countries.

Put differently, Lebanon's political system was supposed to compensate for its shortcomings by taking a short cut to history. By the time *The Precarious Republic* was written, two decades after independence, Lebanon was supposed to have undergone the kinds of social, economic and political change that produced modern Western political systems. But, as Samir Khalaf has pointed out, 'we cannot begin to understand what is involved in the process of modernisation in Lebanon unless we abandon this tendency of viewing change and development on an inevitable, directional and unilinear movement from one polar end of the scheme to the other.'⁴² Instead, Khalaf argues, 'we must consider ... what mixture, or rather blend, of traditional and modern patterns is most effective for an adaptive and conciliatory form of modernisation.'⁴³

Notwithstanding the traditional and modern patterns of modernisation, the rather optimistic belief in the ability of men to create a rational political order meant that the system could be modernised, hence reformed, only by becoming 'more' of what it actually is. For example, Hudson writes that 'the Lebanese system can reduce its fundamental weaknesses by becoming more democratic than it is now.'⁴⁴ Furthermore, 'the one innovation that would decisively improve Lebanon's prospects for future stability, development, and social justice is the development of a country-wide, left-of-centre social-democratic party.'⁴⁵

Clearly, Lebanon would have been better off, as Hudson rightly argues, had political competition been along party lines and had the political process been more stable and democratic. But it is difficult to see how democratic stability in Lebanon could have been 'increased', and how the development of a progressive left-of-centre party would have eventually prevented conflict, promoted political stability and enhanced social justice, as in other societies. Such assumptions do not relate to the historical roots and nature of Lebanon's democratic system. Unlike the transformations that shaped the evolution of democratic institutions in Western societies, the development of Lebanon's democratic order was inextricably linked to the confessional structure of society and to the tradition of communal coexistence and pluralism that emerged in Mount Lebanon, and was later

incorporated in the post-1920 Lebanese state. This means that democracy could not be expanded by a government decision or by the action of one individual, political party or community. Nor could a credible progressive leftist party emerge at a particular point only because it was desirable that it should.

A closer look at Lebanon's history and political system reveals that the abolition of the confessional system would have undermined the very basis of democracy in the country. For confessionalism is in effect a de facto recognition of diversity and dissent, the two conditions necessary for the establishment of democratic order, particularly in a divided society. And even assuming that the transition from 'less democracy' (i.e., some form of consociational democracy) to 'more democracy' (i.e., majority-based) was possible, no institutional or political mechanisms were developed two decades after independence to make the transition possible while avoiding some form of breakdown in the process.

Another problem associated with the modernisation approach concerns the identification of an optimal level of modernisation, one that would make a political system immune to conflict while providing sufficient flexibility to respond to pressures and maintain legitimacy and internal stability.⁴⁶ Obviously, it is difficult to determine a threshold of modernisation beyond which a country might be considered to have surpassed the critical stage in its political development. This task is difficult enough in homogeneous societies, let alone in a heterogeneous society like Lebanon.

In the mid-1960s, Lebanon was certainly a more reformed, united and stable country than at any other time since independence. Furthermore, in comparison with other Third World countries, Lebanon scored better on almost all the indicators of modernisation. But again one question remains: how could the 'loads' on the system be prevented from increasing faster than its 'capabilities'? Herein lies the dilemma, for the system's 'capabilities' to withstand pressures are mostly a function of domestic considerations (i.e., an adequate balance between the various dimensions of modernisation), while the 'loads' are a function of both domestic and external considerations.

Historically, in times of crisis the external loads on Lebanon (regional and international) have always exceeded those arising from internal conditions.

This was the case in pre-1920 Lebanon when the most serious and longest crises in 19th century Mount Lebanon were the result of external intervention. While external intervention in Mount Lebanon's affairs after 1861 was in the end a stabilising factor, in post-1943 Lebanon, particularly following the drastic political and ideological transformation of Arab politics in the 1950s, the regional environment became a major source of domestic instability. This was also the case following the emergence of a militant PLO in the post-1967 phase of the Arab–Israeli conflict.

After the late 1960s, the external loads on the system were beyond Lebanon's control. This occurred at a time when the gap between socio-economic and political modernisation had narrowed in comparison with one or two decades earlier. The system had continued to change, as Hudson had prescribed. It became more democratic, more open, and sectarianism reached on the eve of the war in 1975 its lowest level since independence. In addition, leftist parties, led by Kamal Jumblatt, were far stronger, better organised and more influential than before. These developments, however, did not make the country immune to external conflict. Nor did they enhance the system's capabilities when dealing with the PLO armed presence while preserving democracy, openness, internal cohesion and keeping Arab regimes and Israel at bay.

These issues will be examined in subsequent chapters. But first a word on the largely overlooked historical communal evolution of Lebanese society, both before and after the formation of the state in 1920, is necessary. This helps explain the nature of the confessional political system and its workings in crisis situations.

Notes

- 1 For example, Kamal S. Salibi, *Crossroads to Civil War: Lebanon 1958–1976* (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1976); Walid Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Harvard Centre for International Affairs, 1979); Marius Deeb, *The Lebanese Civil War* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980). On the post-1982 period see, for example, Itamar Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon 1970–1983* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).
- 2 For example, Thierry Desjardins, *Le Martyr du Liban* (Paris: Plon, 1976); Jonathan C. Randal, *Going All the Way: Christian Warlords, Israeli Adventurers, and the War in Lebanon* (New York: Viking Press, 1983); Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984); Thomas L. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984); Sandra Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991).
- 3 Michael Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon* (New York: Random House, 1968). A study that uses multiple theoretical approaches in a confusing manner is Enver M. Khoury, *The Operational Capability of the Lebanese Political System* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1972). An early study on Lebanon is Leila M. T. Meo, *Lebanon: Improbable Nation. A Study in Political Development* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965). Meo deals partly with political development and partly with American foreign policy towards Lebanon, particularly during the 1958 crisis.
- 4 Leonard Binder, ed., *Politics in Lebanon* (New York: John Wiley, 1966).
- 5 David Smock and Audrey Smock, *The Politics of Pluralism: A Comparative Study of Lebanon and Ghana* (New York: Elsevier, 1975).
- 6 For example, Fuad I. Khuri, *From Village to Suburb: Order and Change in Greater Beirut* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Claude Dubar et Salim Nasr, *Les Classes Sociales au Liban* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1976); Kamal S. Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1965); Elie A. Salem, *Modernization without Revolution: Lebanon's Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).
- 7 Karl W. Deutsch, 'Social Mobilization and Political Development', *American Political Science Review* 55 (September 1961): 493–514.
- 8 Shils in Binder, (ed.), *Politics...*, pp. 1–2.
- 9 Albert Hourani, 'Visions of Lebanon', in Halim Barakat (ed.): *Toward a Viable Lebanon* (London: Croom Helm, 1988): 3.
- 10 Kerr in Binder, (ed.), *Politics...*, p. 211
- 11 Binder in Binder (ed.), *Ibid.*, pp. 286–7.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 291.
- 13 Smock, *The Politics of Pluralism...*, p. 312.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 331.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 325.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 326–31.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 326.

- 18 See Michael C. Hudson, 'A Case of Political Development', *Journal of Politics*, 29, no. 4 (November, 1967): 821–37
- 19 Hudson, *The Precarious Republic...*, p. 4.
- 20 Ibid., p. 87.
- 21 Ibid., p. 211.
- 22 Ibid., p. 212.
- 23 Ibid., p. 330.
- 24 Ibid., pp. 330–1.
- 25 Lerner, *The Passing...* Commenting on the shortcomings inherent in the evolutionary approach, Leonard Binder writes that 'the liberal theory of development argues that political development, modernisation, and hence democracy would result in the short or long run so long as change was introduced into any part of the social system and people were allowed, pragmatically, to pursue their own interests. Obviously, urbanisation, education, media exposure, political participation, and economic change would massively alter the traditional system. The pressures for egalitarian change would eventually force the opening of the political system and then permanent change would prevail.' The 'defect' of [this liberal theory of development], Binder argues, 'is not in that it subordinates the interests of developing nations to the ruling class in the United States, but that it extends an image of ourselves as some liberals would like us to be to the potentiality of other, quite different countries. In fact, the liberal development theory is a radical call for virtually unlimited expression of political participation in developing countries, and it is a radical assault on all established institutions, traditional elite and religious structures, corporate arrangements, distributive coalitions, and the like. As such it was a gross distortion of what the United States was actually like and it was viewed increasingly as an irresponsible academic construction. 'The Natural History of Development Theory', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28 (January 1986): 11–12.
- 26 Hudson, *The Precarious Republic...*, p. 184.
- 27 Ibid., p. 107.
- 28 On the 1952 crisis, see Clyde G. Hess and Herbert L. Bodman, 'Confessionalism and Feudality in Lebanese Politics', *Middle East Journal* 8 (Winter 1954): 10–26.
- 29 Ibid., p. 109.
- 30 Ibid., p. 110.
- 31 See Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study in Post-War Arab Politics, 1945–1958*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).
- 32 Hudson, *The Precarious Republic...*, p. 116.
- 33 Harik, 'The Ethnic Revolution...'
- 34 In the preface to the encore edition of *The Precarious Republic...*, Hudson alludes to that problem.
- 35 See, for example, Engin Akarli, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861–1920*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
- 36 Charles Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975): 627.
- 37 Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Change to Change: Modernization Development and Politics,' *Comparative Politics*, (April 1971): 310.
- 38 Hudson, *The Precarious Republic...*, pp. 110–16.

- 39 Huntington, 'The Change to Change...', pp. 310–11.
- 40 In a scathing critique of the sociology of development, John Taylor argues that 'disturbances in an equilibrated system, generated by a combination of endogenous and exogenous factors, necessarily produce increasing structural differentiation, which, by definition, requires re-integrative mechanisms in order that a new level of equilibrium can be attained. He then underlines three major limitations inherent in the structural-functionalist theory of change. 'Firstly, it provides not adequate theoretical basis for analysing the causes of change. Secondly, it cannot establish any theoretical valid conclusions concerning the effects of change that are generalisable from one social system to another. Finally, it cannot provide any basis for analysing future possible directions of change, except by relating them to an end-state which already exists; consequently, any qualitatively new forms of economic and social development generated in the course of "modernisation" can only be labelled as "deviants" from this norm'. John G. Taylor, *From Modernisation to Modes of Production: A Critique of the Sociologies of Development and Underdevelopment* (London: Macmillan, 1979).
- 41 See Chapter 3: The Uneven Communal Development of Lebanese Society, pp. 31–49.
- 42 Samir Khalaf, *Lebanon's Predicament...*, p. 18.
- 43 Ibid., pp. 15–21.
- 44 Hudson, *The Precarious Republic...*, p. 329.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 See, for example, Saul Newman, 'Does Modernization Breed Political Conflict?', *World Politics* 43 (April 1991): 451–7.

PART II

The Political and Communal Scene in Pre-War Lebanon

3

The Uneven Communal Development of Lebanese Society

Plural societies, made up of different communal groups (sectarian, ethnic, racial, etc.), have received significant attention in the literature on integration and conflict, particularly in the last two decades.¹ In a much quoted article written in 1972, Walker Connor stated that in fifty-three states, the population is divided into more than *five* significant groups.² Since the early 1970s, the number of fragmented countries has continued to increase. In a recent work on multi-cultural citizenship, Will Kymlicka points out that ‘most countries today are culturally diverse. According to recent estimates, the world’s 184 independent states contain over 600 living language groups. In very few countries can the citizens be said to share the same language, or belong to the same ethno-national group.’³

The sudden rise of dormant ethnic nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union, following several decades of suppression by the state, attests to the strong communal instincts of divided societies.⁴ Let loose, society after a period of forced integration, with its communal priorities and perceptions, may take over the state. But the pace and nature of change differs among societies. In the former Yugoslavia the break-up of the state involved war and violence while in Czechoslovakia political divorce between Czechs and Slovaks was peaceful and orderly.

Long before the debate on pluralism in the contemporary nation-state was initiated,⁵ and before the recent upsurge of political pluralism in the post-Cold War era, Lebanon was one of the few countries in the Third World that

had come to grips with its plural character at a comparatively early date. Indeed, from the time the modern state came into being in the 1920s, Lebanon adopted a political system which reflected the confessional structure of society. Lebanon's pragmatic approach meant the institutionalisation of communalism in the political process.⁶

This contrasted sharply with the approach pursued by other countries where the authoritarian state opted for a policy of forced integration in the name of national unity, or in the name of a convenient ideology whether of the Right or of the Left. A comparative study of Lebanon and Ghana written in the early 1970s showed that forced assimilation in Ghana did not make the country any more united than Lebanon which pursued a policy of unity in diversity based on the recognition of pluralism in the political process.⁷ Lebanon's confessional political system, which approximates roughly to Arend Lijphart's consociational democracy,⁸ functioned relatively well for over three decades. It collapsed when it was subjected to pressure, particularly externally-generated pressure, which the system could not contain while preserving its open character and the plural nature of society.⁹

Lebanon's Plural Society in Comparative Perspective

While Lebanon shares broad characteristics with other heterogeneous societies, it has particular features of its own. Lebanon differs from other divided societies like Belgium, Canada, Switzerland, the former Czechoslovakia in Europe as well as Cyprus, Iraq, Sudan, Sri Lanka and Malaysia in at least five ways. First, Lebanon has a large number of communities that are politically active, some of whom have distinctly communal agendas. In most plural societies, such as those mentioned above, two or three groups are mobilised politically and are

prone to conflict. In Lebanon, by contrast, the number of groups in relation to the size of the population is relatively high.¹⁰ Three large groups (Maronite, Sunni, Shia) in addition to several smaller groups, take active part in the political process; some groups are in a position to exercise a strong veto power, notably the Druze, particularly in times of crisis.

Second, in Lebanon there is no numerically dominant group which constitutes 60 or 70 per cent of the total population, as there is in countries like Cyprus, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, India and Sudan. Indeed, no one group makes up more than 50 per cent of the total population.¹¹ Furthermore, the differences in the size of the three major groups (Maronite, Sunni, Shia) are relatively small. Differences of this order have limited political significance in a society such as that of Lebanon made up of a large number of communities especially when differences among communities involve not only domestic issues, as in the case of other divided societies, but also foreign policy and regional politics.

Third, the changing demographic balance in Lebanon also differentiates it from other plural societies. In heterogeneous societies the birth rate among different communities is roughly equal moving upward, as in India and Sri Lanka, or levelling off and even moving downwards as in Belgium or Canada. In Lebanon, however, the birth rate differs among communities: the Shia have the highest, followed by the Sunni and the Maronite communities.¹² The demographic balance among the communities constitutes an additional element of instability which does not exist in other plural societies.

Fourth, in many plural societies, especially those with functioning democracies like Belgium and Switzerland, communal transformations have reached a significant degree of maturity.¹³ Conflicts are less generated by the emerging consciousness of supposedly quiescent groups than by

occasional tensions caused by regional, political and cultural differences. These conflicts are either resolved or contained through the democratic process.

Moreover, democratic plural societies like Canada and Belgium where conflicts which have traditionally mobilised groups and driven them to political action, such as the demand for political rights, autonomy and recognition of cultural identity, have undergone little change over the years.¹⁴ By contrast, in Lebanon communal development has been in constant flux and disputes have changed partly because of internal politics and partly because of the unstable regional situation which has deeply affected Lebanon. The latest manifestation of Lebanon's communal transformations was the crystallisation of communal consciousness among the Shia from the early 1970s. As a result, the Shia developed a distinct political agenda both internally and, under the influence of Islamic Iran, externally.

Fifth, what sets Lebanon apart from other divided societies is the regional order with which it has had to interact. The Middle East is one of the most unstable regional orders in the post-Second World War international system. Other divided societies in Europe, Asia or Africa have not had to deal with the kinds of regional conflicts that have affected Lebanon, notably frequent inter-Arab disputes and the Arab–Israeli–Palestinian conflict. By and large, unrest in other regional orders since the Second World War was provoked by border disputes or by the action of one country in support of a separatist group in another.¹⁵

One way to understand the origins and nature of the different outlooks and priorities of Lebanon's communities¹⁶ and how they relate to the political process, both in its internal and external dimensions, is to analyse the uneven pattern of communal development. The starting point in this analysis is the Maronites and the Druze in Mount Lebanon, then the Sunni and the Maronites in post-1920 Lebanon and the Shia and other communities in recent years. Although other communities played important roles in shaping the course of Lebanese politics, particularly after 1920, discussion will focus mainly on these.

Uneven Communal Development: Maronite Versus Druze Studies dealing with contemporary post-1920 Lebanese politics have generally considered independence as a benchmark to assess the workings of the political system.¹⁷ Students of Lebanon have, in this way, overlooked an important dimension of Lebanese society and politics: the uneven pattern of the historical development of sectarian groups at all political, social and economic levels. If this is not taken into account there is a possibility of missing the inner dynamics of Lebanese politics and society and thus leaving many questions about the divergent attitudes, priorities and perceptions of the different communities unanswered.

The following questions are pertinent here. How can we explain, for example, the divergent attitudes of Christians and Muslims, particularly Maronite and Sunni, towards Lebanon's national identity before and after independence? How do we account for the different communal attitudes towards the state? Also, how do we account for the emergence of a distinct political agenda associated with the Maronite community prior to the 1920s which differed from the political agenda of other groups in the region, like the Hashemite platform of Arabism with which Lebanon's Sunnis identified? Moreover, how do we explain the different patterns of social and political mobilisation of sectarian groups: Maronite and Sunni before the mid-1970s and Shia afterwards? How do we explain the varying mechanisms of political organisation and the nature of political rivalries of the communities? Finally, what impact did the communally-based educational and social institutions have on social mobility, which differed among sectarian groups?

To address these questions we must look, not only at post-1920 or post-independence Lebanon, but also at the centuries of political and socio-economic change prior to the formation of the modern state in 1920. If history is remembered, recovered and invented, as Bernard Lewis has argued,¹⁸ in Lebanon this has been a continuous process. Indeed, debates over the 'proper' version of Lebanese history have always been a prominent feature of intellectual life in pre- and post-war Lebanon.¹⁹

The starting point for a comparative analysis of the uneven development of Lebanese communities is the Maronite and Druze communities in Mount Lebanon. During a period of roughly four centuries (beginning with Ottoman rule in the early 16th century until World War One) the two Mountain-based communities underwent drastic transformation at all political, social, economic and demographic levels.²⁰ But while the Maronite community was in constant flux, the Druze community was comparatively static. This gap is reflected in the social organisation of the two communities.

One differentiating feature is demographic change. From the early 16th until the early 20th century, the demographic and territorial expansion of the Maronites was the fastest and the largest in modern Maronite history. The movement began in the north and spread to the southern parts of the Mountain. By the mid-19th century the Maronites constituted a majority, not only in areas where they were traditionally established but also in the central and southern parts of the Mountain, including Druze-inhabited areas. Along with this expansion came the social and educational institutions of the church. This expansion, however, was gradual occurring over a period of several centuries and did not involve conquests and violence. Whatever violence occurred in the mid-19th century, it was mainly over political power and not because of attempts by one group to expand territorially by force and displace the other.

Second, within the framework of the *Imara* – the Ma'ni then the Shihabi – the Maronites were at the centre of political power in the Mountain, first through the role played by lordly families associated with the *Imara* and later as a group. Maronite political influence reached unprecedented levels during the Shihabi *Imara*. By the mid-18th century, the Sunni Shihabi *amirs* converted to Christianity. So did other *amirs*, like the originally Druze

Abillamah family, which also became Maronite. By the early 19th century, the power equation in the Mountain was tilted in favour of the Maronites.

Third, the rising power of the Maronite church, embodied in the patriarchate and monastic orders and the role it played in the affairs of the community were unparalleled developments in the modern history of Mount Lebanon.²¹ No other institution in Mount Lebanon was in a position to rival the Maronite church. By the mid-19th century, the church and its monastic orders were present in various areas of the Mountain. Its power had surpassed that of the lordly Maronite families, notably the Khazen family, on which it had previously depended for protection and support.²² 'By the end of the 18th century,' writes Iliya Harik, the 'church had become the largest, the most organised, and the wealthiest organisation in the whole of Mount Lebanon.'²³ It established educational institutions in various parts of the Mountain and had an educated and active clergy. By the time the *Mutasarrifiyya* was established, the Maronite Patriarch emerged as the de facto central political figure in Mount Lebanon.

Fourth, during a period of over three centuries, relations between the Maronite community and the West, particularly with Rome and Paris, were strengthened and institutionalised. The Maronite College, established in Rome in 1584, educated hundreds of clergymen who returned to Mount Lebanon and played leading roles in the affairs of the community. Other graduates stayed in Europe where they taught at leading universities in Rome, Paris, Vienna and Madrid, and made valuable contributions in Oriental studies.²⁴ The opening to the West had other far-reaching consequences: it brought Catholic missionaries and institutions to the Mountain, notably educational institutions, which educated many of the intellectual and political elites of post-1920 Lebanon. Most active and influential were the Jesuits.

Fifth, by the late 19th century, the social organisation of the Maronite community had fundamentally changed. By then, an educated and relatively well-off elite gained political prominence. Parallel to this change was the emergence of a new wealthy bourgeoisie active in commerce and in the silk trade with Europe.²⁵ This was also a time when the first generation of wealthy emigrants returned to the homeland and began to have an increasingly visible impact on the political and social life of the Mountain.

Moreover, the second half of the 19th century witnessed the establishment of Maronite educational and social institutions²⁶ in Beirut at a time when an increasing number of Maronites and other Christians migrated to the city.²⁷

Sixth, these changes, which occurred over a period of approximately four centuries, added to the experience of the *Mutasarrifiyya*, gave the Maronites a distinct communal identity and a political outlook which differed from that of other groups in the Mountain and in the surrounding areas. For them, 'self-rule', as embodied in the *Mutasarrifiyya*'s administrative council, was only a stepping stone for a state and, more accurately, for a nation-state.²⁸ As early as the 1830s, Maronite intellectuals, mostly clerics, began to refer to the Maronite community as a nation (*al-Umma al-Maruniyya*).²⁹ On the eve of World War One, a Maronite political agenda was in the making. These demands were articulated in the memorandum submitted by the Maronite patriarch to the post-war peace conference³⁰ which convened in Paris (1918–20) to discuss future political arrangements for the territories of the defunct Ottoman Empire.

In contrast to the far-reaching social change within the Maronite community there was comparatively limited change within the Druze community.³¹ By and large, during a period of four centuries the pattern of political and social change within the Druze community moved in the opposite direction. This translated into a steady decline of political power, both at the centre of authority within the *Imara* and at the level of the influence of the leading political families.

In contrast to the demographic and territorial expansion of the Maronites, the Druze have experienced a process of contraction as their demographic and territorial base has continued to shrink over the years. More importantly, the Druze, unlike the Maronites, did not have diversified power centres. From the early years of the *Imara* to the present, two factions have dominated Druze politics: Yemeni versus Qaysi until the early 18th century, and subsequently Yazbaki versus Jumblatti. Nor was there a Druze institution similar to the Maronite church, which could have engendered the kind of social and institutional change that was generated by the church both within and outside Mount Lebanon.

The rather rigid political and communal structure of the Druze could not keep up with the rapid changes in the social organisation of the Maronites over a period of several centuries. The outcome of this uneven development was reflected in the imbalance of power during the *Mutasarrifiyya*. If the Druze scored a military victory over the Christians in the 1860 civil war, that did not translate into a political victory. Under the *Mutasarrifiyya*, political power was mainly in Maronite hands. Furthermore, by the time World War One was brought to an end, the Druze, unlike the Maronites, had not developed a political agenda of their own. Nor did they articulate the kind of demands that struck a chord with the political jargon of the day: that of the nation-state.

Druze-Maronite politics and communal relations in Mount Lebanon lost much of their centrality to the decision-making process following the inclusion of the Mountain into the new state in 1920. The territorial, political and demographic change in post-1920 Lebanon has drastically altered the rules of the game that prevailed in Mount Lebanon. The dual Maronite-Druze power structure was replaced by another dual power structure based on Maronite and Sunni politics. This new power structure was untested. It differed from the previous one at the political, social and communal level.

The Modern Lebanese State: Maronite Versus Sunni
After 1920, two different patterns of change were in the making. One, led by the state, resulted in narrowing the gap between each community. The other was a function of the dynamics of change within each community. The French authorities pursued a policy of co-optation aimed at attracting support for the newly-created state. This policy affected communal politics and perceptions. Its impact was most visible within the Shia community

whose political leadership came to support the state now that they earned official state recognition as a distinct communal group separate from Sunni Islam, a status which the Shia lacked under Sunni Ottoman rule.³²

The problematic issue in post-1920 Lebanon centred on the new political encounter between two groups which had little previous communal interaction: the Sunni and the Maronites. Contrary to the long Maronite-Druze experience of cooperation and conflict in Mount Lebanon politics since the Ma'ni *Imara*, the Maronites and the Sunni had neither co-operated as two communities nor engaged in conflict. There was neither co-operation at the centre of political power within the framework of the *Imara* or the *Mutasarrifiyya*, nor was there communal conflict, as was the case between Druze and Maronites in the mid- 19th century. Whatever change affected the power equation in Mount Lebanon, it did not involve the small Sunni community that inhabited the Mountain.

Sunni-Maronite relations were put to the test for the first time in the state of Greater Lebanon. This was an unprecedented development and an equally unprecedented experiment at communal and political coexistence. For the two groups had not only divergent political outlooks, but also a radically different historical development both as rulers and ruled.

The political experience of Mount Lebanon's *Imara* and later the *Mutasarrifiyya* was alien to the Sunni populations of the interior and the coastal cities. While a small Sunni community lived in the southern part of the Mountain, it played a marginal role in its communal politics. The Sunni Shihabi *amirs*, who succeeded their Druze Ma'ni counterparts, assumed the *Imara* not as representatives of the Sunni community but because of kinship ties with the Ma'nis. Soon afterwards, the Shihabi *amirs* converted to Christianity and identified with the Maronite community. While the Druze and the Maronites lived under Ottoman rule, the Sunni were the privileged subjects of the Ottoman state and its caliph, the sultan.

In post-1920 Lebanon the gap that separated the Maronite and Sunni communities hinged on two factors: the attitude towards the state and

national political identification. If for the Maronites Greater Lebanon was the crowning of their political efforts and the fulfilment of their national aspirations, for the Sunni it was the culmination of their defeat. Najla Atiya's comprehensive work on the attitude of the Sunni community towards the Lebanese state reveals the extent and nature of the Sunni opposition to the state and their rejection of participation in this new entity on political, religious and economic grounds.³³

Sunni opposition continued during the mandate and took on different forms until independence in 1943. After 1920, the Sunni found themselves separated from the Syrian interior and, as a result, their interests were jeopardised. More importantly, their rejectionist attitude had a distinct nationalist colouring and it was this that shaped Maronite-Sunni relations during the mandate and in subsequent years.

Following the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the Hashemite-led Arab nationalist movement,³⁴ it was not surprising that the Sunni community would identify with Arabism. In Lebanon, there was opposition to the French who, unlike the British, lacked a strong presence in the region prior to World War One and who clashed with the Arab nationalist movement depriving Faisal of the throne in Damascus, a city that housed the most radical Arab nationalists of the post-war period.³⁵ There was also opposition to being part of a new 'artificial' entity, detached from 'Arab Syria' dominated by the Maronites. With the Maronites, the problem was threefold: they were Christians, pro-French, and they had little enthusiasm for the idea of Arabism that emerged after the war.

If for the Sunni majority in the former Ottoman-ruled Arab East, the transition during this period was from Ottomanism to Arabism, as described by C. Ernest Dawn,³⁶ for the Maronites the transition was from a vaguely defined form of Ottomanism to Lebanism. Indeed, by the time the allies were negotiating the future of Ottoman territories (roughly between 1916 and 1920), the Maronites were able to articulate a political-nationalist platform: that of enlarging the *Mutasarrifiyya* and creating the state of Greater Lebanon. For them, post-1920 Lebanon was a natural extension of the Maronite communal nationalism, which emerged in Mount Lebanon.

In other words, Maronite national identity found its political expression in the new state of Greater Lebanon. Similarly, Arab nationalism manifested

itself in the attempt to form a 'Greater' Arab state with its capital in Damascus. It is no coincidence that in the various schemes that were considered for a post-war Arab state, Mount Lebanon, which had a Christian majority and which had enjoyed semiautonomous rule since 1861, would be granted special status within a larger decentralised political arrangement.³⁷

Maronite-Sunni rivalry was one of the important features of political life during the mandate. Despite increasing participation by moderate Sunni in the political process, the two groups continued to clash over fundamental issues. Leading Sunni Arab nationalist figures, led by Riad al-Solh, remained in the 1920s and 1930s resolute in their call to incorporate the territories that were attached to Greater Lebanon into Syria. This characterised the Sunni position until the early 1940s.

Various developments, some related to the Second World War, others to political developments in Syria and Lebanon, paved the way for the rapprochement between the Sunnis and the Maronites, the two groups which had the greatest veto power in the country. By the early 1940s, Maronite-Sunni differences were temporarily put on hold. This 'change of mood', as Albert Hourani put it, facilitated the coming of independence³⁸ and was based on a formula of confessional coexistence, known as the National Pact. This gentlemen's agreement meant the dropping of mutual Maronite and Sunni vetoes in return for a conditional acceptance of an independent Lebanon where political office would be distributed on a sectarian basis.³⁹

The legitimacy of the National Pact was based on a dual assumption: Muslim opposition to Arab unity – especially with Syria – and Christian opposition to the French mandate. Instead, Lebanon was to have an 'Arab face' and to adopt a neutral position in inter-Arab politics. It was now the task of the Muslims to 'Arabise' Lebanon's Christians, while the latter would seek to 'Lebanise' their Muslim compatriots. But the National Pact, like any contract between two parties, was subject to changing interpretations, all the more so since it was the work of a relatively homogeneous elite, made possible by the favourable regional and international circumstances of the first half of the 1940s.⁴⁰ The 'masses',

however, were little touched by it. Furthermore, international developments were not always favourable to keep the National Pact afloat.⁴¹

While many Christians were content to confine Lebanon's Arabism to the 'face', many Muslims were not. These disagreements were manageable so long as Lebanon's Arab complexion could be decided only by the Lebanese. But that was not possible. The political character of Arabism was always a bone of contention among Arab nationalist leaders who, on many occasions, resorted to violence to impose their brand of Arabism on others. Thus if the Lebanese were able to agree on the content of Arabism when the National Pact was brokered in the 1940s, the Arabism of other regimes was constantly changing and beyond their control. This characterised Arab nationalism which in the 1950s and 1960s, at the height of Nasserism and Ba'thism, reached unprecedented levels of radicalism and fragmentation.

Lebanon was affected by Arab nationalist politics and had to find ways to weather the storm emanating from inter-Arab disputes.⁴² One such storm was the rise of Nasserism which disrupted the status quo in almost all Arab countries. In Lebanon, it led to the 1958 crisis which undermined the political and communal bases of the National Pact.⁴³ Not only did Lebanon's Sunni leaders support Nasser, some also called for unity with Syria and Egypt under the framework of the United Arab Republic. But the issues at stake in the late 1950s were more divisive than in the preceding two or three decades. The call for unity with Syria in 1958 targeted all of Lebanon and not only the territories added to post-1920 Lebanon, as was the case before.

In 1958 the gap between mainstream Christian and Muslim public opinion widened once again over the issue of Lebanon's Arabism. The country's Arab 'face' fell short of satisfying the aspirations of one segment of Lebanese society. While the attitude of the Christian leadership, notably Maronite leaders, ranged from opposition to Nasserism to moderate support, there were no calls for any form of unity with Syria. In fact, the political stand of Christian leaders in the 1958 crisis was driven more by opposition to President Chamoun than by support for Nasser.

Similar questions were raised in the 1970s, but the situation both in Lebanon and in the region differed from the 1950s. In regional politics, Arab nationalism lost much of its earlier political vigour. The predominant

issue after 1967 was the Arab–Israeli conflict. The reordering of priorities placed the Palestinian dimension of the conflict at centre stage. The main stage for that was Lebanon; the centre was the PLO. The different attitudes that had separated Lebanese communities were revived. The political game in the 1970s was not only more complex than in previous decades but also self-destructive.

The Socio-Political Dimension: The Shia and the Rest The complexity of the internal political scene in the 1970s was due in part to the rise of a new communal political agenda, that of the Shia community. Why have the Shia lagged behind other groups in their communal political mobilisation, particularly vis-à-vis the Maronites and the Sunni? And why was it expressed in radical terms, when, prior to 1975, Shia mobilisation was closer to the mainstream of Lebanon's confessional politics rather than its radical fringe? Once again, we need to look at the uneven pattern of development among the various communities in Lebanon.

In pre-Ottoman times, many Shia living in Mount Lebanon were forced out by the wars and conquests of the Mamluk era. In Ottoman Mount Lebanon areas inhabited by Shia, particularly in the Beqa, were part of the *Imara*. Other areas, mainly in Jabal 'Amil (present-day south Lebanon), which had the largest concentration of Shia, were not part of Mount Lebanon and did not play a significant role in its communal affairs. The Shia Hamadeh clan exercised rule in certain Mountain districts, especially in the north, in the name of the Ottoman *wali* rather than as leaders of the Shia community. In the 17th and 18th centuries, confrontations took place between the Shia Hamadeh clan and Mountain rulers, both Druze and

Maronite. These confrontations, however, were clannish power struggles between local chieftains. They did not lead to the kind of sectarian animosity and divisions that marked Druze-Maronite relations in the 19th century. The relatively small Shia community in central Mount Lebanon was less active as a group in local Mountain politics than the Druze and the Maronites. This was particularly the case in the turbulent decades of the 19th century.

Unlike Christian groups, whose affairs were run by the *millet* system, and which were recognised as religious ethnic communities,⁴⁴ the Shia were not recognised as a community nor as a distinct religious sect by the (Sunni) Ottoman state. The 19th-century British traveller David Urquhart observed that the Shia were 'hated by the Persians as Arabs, and by Turks and Arabs as Shiites'⁴⁵ – a predicament which was not shared by any other group, whether Christian or Muslim.

Moreover, the Shia did not experience the kind of political and communal development which shaped the social organisation of the Druze and Maronite communities over a period of three or four centuries. Apart from Jabal 'Amil, which had unique communal and political characteristics, the Shia did not practice centralised rule, unlike the Druze through the office of the *amir*, nor did they have communal institutions and relations with the outside world in the same way as the Maronites. In contrast to the territorial expansion of the Maronites, the Shia presence in Mount Lebanon continued to shrink and became concentrated in areas peripheral to the Mountain.

Following the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and the take-over of the French and the British in the Arab East, the Shia community did not articulate a political agenda of its own, like the Maronite community did.⁴⁶ Nor were the Shia on the political agenda of the major powers.⁴⁷ However, Shia political and religious leaders were politically active – some supported the Hashemites while others gradually opted for Greater Lebanon.⁴⁸

Far-reaching changes in Shia communal affairs and in the political process occurred in post-1920 Lebanon. By the time the constitution was adopted in 1926, several established Shia leaders in the south and the Beqa had given support to the newly-established state and began to participate in the Beirut-based government.⁴⁹ Shia identification with the state was strengthened following the official recognition of a distinct status for the

community within the framework of the confessional system and, more importantly, following the recognition of the Ja'fari school of jurisprudence in 1926. This gave the Shia autonomous legal religious status vis-à-vis the Sunni community. Shia politicians advocated political representation along confessional lines. This representation gave the community, which was then a vulnerable newcomer to the post-1920 political process, a guaranteed share in the political system.⁵⁰

Unlike the Sunni, the Shia were less preoccupied with Arab nationalist politics.⁵¹ Nor did the Shia public respond to Arab nationalist slogans and symbols in the same way as the Sunni public. The political mobilisation of the Shia community, whether at the level of the elites or the masses, was not centred on Arab nationalist issues. One such issue, the re-integration of the territories added to the Lebanese state in 1920 to Syria, was not as central to Shia politics as to the Sunni community. Nor did it mobilise the Shia 'street' in the two decades prior to independence.

Local Shia politics in the south and the Beqa did not involve issues similar to those that characterised local Sunni politics in Tripoli and Beirut. Apart from a few Shia figures, notably Rustum Haidar, who was an associate of Amir (later King) Faisal in Iraq, support for the Hashemites was most visible within the Shia religious leadership. Shia political leaders, however, espoused different views. They quickly opted for integration into Greater Lebanon. Unlike influential Sunni leaders who, until independence, did not take part in Lebanon's politics and identified with the Arab nationalist platform of Syria's National Bloc, Lebanon's influential Shia leaders in the 1920s and 1930s, notably Ahmad al-Ass'ad, Ahmad al-Husseini, Sabri Hamadeh, Najib Osseiran and others, took part in the political process. Some were in parliament, others served in government.

Prominent Shia leaders exerted great influence in their respective regions. Indeed, they often exerted greater control over their constituencies than leaders from other communities. This, however, did not translate in similar political influence in the politics of Beirut. Indeed, Shia confessional representation in the office of Parliament Speaker continued to be disputed with the Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic communities even after independence, when it was finally reserved to the Shia community in 1947.⁵² At the time of independence, the role of Shia leaders was

instrumental in supporting the Khoury-Solh partnership. Ahmad al-Ass'ad's support for Riad al-Solh in the 1943 parliamentary election, which preceded independence, was crucial for Solh's electoral victory in the south.

The gap that separated the Shia from other communities was most pronounced in the non-political domain. As mentioned earlier, historically the Shia community developed differently from the Druze and Maronites, first under the *Imara*, and later under the *Mutasarrifiyya* which preceded Greater Lebanon. In the mid-1940s, when Lebanon gained independence, the social organisation of the Shia changed little in comparison with that of other communities. Notwithstanding the religious schools and the long tradition of learning in labal 'Amil, the Shia community did not possess the kind of educational and social institutions that other communities had.⁵³ Nor did the Shia have a sizeable urban-based middle class, an asset from whose ranks the Christian and Sunni communities drew a new generation of political elites.

It was not until the 1960s that politicised communal change became increasingly visible within the Shia community. This was a time when the Shia began to move in larger numbers to Beirut and its southern and northern suburbs.⁵⁴ This was also a time when new Shia emigrant wealth began to have a more visible impact on communal affairs. Similarly, educational levels increased and social mobility was on the rise.

Equally important was the increasing political activism of the community; here lies the fundamental difference between the political mobilisation of the Shia community and that of other communities. Contrary to the gradual political mobilisation of the Maronites, the Sunni and the Druze, which took place under favourable internal and external circumstances, the Shia political mobilisation was abrupt and highly destabilising both for the community and for the country. This can be attributed in part to the time lag in the communal development of the Shia vis-à-vis other groups. In addition to the forces of social mobilisation, as explained by Karl Deutsch and applied to Lebanon by Augustus Richard Norton,⁵⁵ the political radicalisation of the Shia community was the product of several factors.

First, the political domination of the community by a handful of leaders over a period of several decades. From independence to the mid-1970s only four leaders (Sabri Hamadeh, Ahmad al-Ass'ad and his son, Kamel, and

Adel Osseiran) came to occupy the highest Shia post in government, that of speaker of parliament.⁵⁶ While this was also true of the Druze community, dominated by the Jumblatt and Arslan families, Shia communal leadership was more contested than that of the Druze. The Shia community was also larger than the Druze and was undergoing social transformation, something that the Druze did not experience in the same scope and intensity in the 1960s and 1970s.

Second, particularly since the 1960s, the gap that separated the traditional Shia leadership from the 'masses' increased at the political, social and economic levels. A new generation of educated and politically ambitious Shia found themselves little represented by the traditional leadership in the south and the Beqa. Communally-generated mechanisms of change were obstructed partly because of the deeply-rooted and static power structure, which had a strong hold over the community. The other venue for change through the religious establishment was frozen until it was activated in the 1970s.

Third, at the level of the two aggregate groups – Christians and Muslims – the Shia community lacked the kind of influence and autonomy that the Sunni community enjoyed. There was a feeling of Sunni dominance, if not hegemony, over Shia affairs, not only politically but also in religious affairs.⁵⁷ It was in part to redress this imbalance that the Muslim Shia Higher Council was established in December 1967 and became operative in 1969.

Fourth, the rise of a new Shia leadership embodied in the role of Imam Musa al-Sadr. No other community in post-1943 Lebanon produced a religious figure who altered the political structure of his community as much as Sadr, both before and after his disappearance. Initially supported by the Chehabist political establishment, Sadr sought to carve out a place of his own in Shia communal politics. He also sought to give the community an autonomous status, away from Sunni religious and political dominance. He carefully played the political game of change while skilfully drawing on the power equation of confessional politics. His 'political agenda', writes Fouad Ajami, 'emerged out of the way he interpreted faith. Faith was not about ritual but about social concerns, about the needs of men. Religion was not something that had to be quarantined and kept pure by stern guardians;

it could be made to address modern needs ... Political ambition – something that the traditional men of religion frowned upon, a defiled realm of greed and naked desire – Sayyid Musa neither openly asserted nor forswore ... He was the harbinger of a religion-political movement that blurred the line between worldliness, *al dunya*, and religion, *al din*.⁵⁸

With Musa al-Sadr religion was back after a period of retreat. The last time the religious leadership exercised decisive influence in political affairs during the pre-independence period was in 1920.⁵⁹ Sadr captured the social and political realities of his community and brandished a new and powerful political weapon: that of the deprived, *al-mahrumin*. The symbolism of *al-mahrumin* was an unprecedented ‘unifying factor’ for ‘all the Shia’, drawn from all social backgrounds, as explained by Waddah Sharara.⁶⁰ Empowered by the demographic expansion of the community and by regional disparities between the areas of the centre and those of the periphery, the issue of the deprived came to constitute the political platform of Shia communal politics in the 1970s.⁶¹ Irrespective of the historical origins and causes of deprivation, Shia communal politics, beginning in the 1970s, was transformed. It was now associated with the new home-grown ‘ideology’ of deprivation.

These changes could have been less destabilising and thus better absorbed into the political process had they occurred under more favourable circumstances both within Lebanon and in relation to regional politics. Integrative change in line with the confessional framework, as prescribed by Sadr’s platform, produced concrete results. By the mid-1970s Sadr made significant headway in the Beqa and was increasingly influential in the south. But the transformation of communal Shia politics took place at a time of momentous change: the 1967 war and its aftermath and a few years later the war in Lebanon.

Of all Lebanese communities, the Shia were the most affected by the ‘Palestinian era’ in wartime Lebanon.⁶² Not only did the PLO polarise Shia communal politics, it turned the south into an open battlefield with Israel. This resulted in civilian casualties and property damage which worsened the socio-economic conditions of the southern border areas and led to large scale migration to Beirut and its southern suburb.⁶³ A new type of solidarity was brought to light: Shia deprivation by the Lebanese state and Palestinian

deprivation of their homeland. One manifestation of this improbable solidarity was the training and arming of the Shia militia Amal.⁶⁴ This solidarity by default was short-lived. Clashes between PLO guerrillas and the Shia began prior to the Israeli invasion in 1982 and continued afterwards in 'the war of the camps' in Beirut between Syrian-backed Amal and Palestinian forces in the mid-1980s.

As war continued, the process of Shia radicalisation was accelerated following the entry of new actors: Israel (especially from 1982 to 1985) and Islamic Iran.⁶⁵ Iran's influence on the Shia community was overwhelming at all political, social and religious levels.⁶⁶ While this falls beyond the scope of this study, suffice it to say that the nature and scale of political and communal change experienced by the Shia was unprecedented in Lebanon's modern history and was not experienced by other Lebanese communities. Indeed, 'the Shia were to swing all the way from quietism to martyrology,'⁶⁷ a quantum leap in a period of two decades. This characterised the Shia political awakening and military mobilisation in post-1975 Lebanon.

Conclusion

This brief comparative account dealing with particular Lebanese communities has focused on the political and communal features that marked these groups as well as on communal relations both in pre- and post-1920 Lebanon. For the Druze and Maronites, communal and/or political change was experienced most in Mount Lebanon during and after the *Imara*. In post-1920 Lebanon, the most important dimension of Maronite-Sunni relations, both in its conflictual and consensual manifestations, had to do with the changing nature and interpretations of Lebanon's Arabism prior to and after independence. By contrast, the political platform of the Shia community was not associated with a particular political or ideological orientation as was the case in the Sunni community. Nor was it a function of communal and/or political relations as in the case of Druze and Maronites in pre-1920 Lebanon, or Sunni and Maronites after 1920. What differentiated the Shia from other communities, especially in relation to the political process, was their belated communal political mobilisation at a time of rapid, destabilising internal and regional change.

It is because Lebanese communities have had an uneven historical development that their socio-cultural identity, social organisation, corporate communal identity, political mobilisation and political agendas have differed. In some areas, communal differences narrowed. In other areas the gap remained, most notably in the socio-political organisation of each community and in the perception of corporate threat. If, for example, the Maronites were the first to oppose the PLO armed presence and were the first to mobilise politically and later militarily against the PLO, it is because they felt threatened by what they regarded as the PLO control over Lebanon.

But opposition to the PLO was not confined to the Maronites; other communities followed suit. Beginning in the late 1970s, clashes took place between PLO forces and former wartime allies, notably Amal. Whatever attitudes other Lebanese groups initially had towards the PLO military presence, they came to change their views in the course of the war. The

‘time-lag’ was also visible in the communal attitude towards the state, the political system and Lebanon’s relations with neighbouring countries.⁶⁸

The varying patterns of communal change were also apparent at the level of the political leadership. The Sunni and Maronite communities provide prime examples of this kind of change. For this reason, it would be interesting to compare the different paths to communal leadership in the Maronite and Sunni communities, the two most influential groups in pre-war Lebanon.

Notes

- 1 See, for example, Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Arend Lijphart (ed.), *Conflict and Coexistence in Belgium: Dynamics of a Cultural Divided Society* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1981); Leo Kuper and M. G. Smith (eds.), *Pluralism in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); M. G. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965); Eric Nordlinger, *Conflict Resolution in Divided Societies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Centre for International Affairs), Occasional Papers in International Affairs, No. 29, January 1972; Val Lorwin, 'Segmented Pluralism: Ideological Cleavages and Political Cohesion in the smaller European Democracies', *Comparative Politics*, 3 (January 1971): 141–75; N. Glazer and D. Moynihan (eds.), *Ethnicity, Theory and Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).
- 2 Walker Connor, 'Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?' *World Politics*, XXIV (April 1972): 320.
- 3 Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship. A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995): 1 and pp. 10–33.
- 4 See the recent comparative survey by Georg Brunner, *Nationality Problems and Minority Conflicts in Eastern Europe* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers, 1996).
- 5 Leo Kuper, for example, has identified two models of plural society: the equilibrium model and the conflict model which stresses coercion as a means of securing internal order among groups. 'Plural Societies: Perspectives and Problems', in Kuper and Smith (eds), *Pluralism...*, p. 8.
- 6 Harik, 'The Ethnic Revolution...' pp. 313–15.
- 7 Smock and Smock, *The Politics of Pluralism...*
- 8 Arend Lijphart, 'Consociational Democracy' *World Politics* 21 (January 1969): 207–25. See also R. H. Dekmejian, 'Consociational Democracy in Crisis: The Case of Lebanon', *Comparative Politics*, 10 (January 1978): 251–65; Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). For a critical assessment of consociationalism in Lebanon, see Hudson, 'The Problem of Authoritative Power...' pp. 224–39.
- 9 See chapter 8: The Lebanese State and the Arab State System, pp. 99–110.
- 10 See Farid el Khazen, 'Lebanon's Communal Elite-Mass Politics: The Institutionalisation of Disintegration', *The Beirut Review*, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 53–82.
- 11 See Theodor Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation* (London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies and I. B. Tauris, 1993): 87–8. See also Gérard Figuié, *Le Point sur le Liban, 1994* (Zalka: Anthologie, 1994): 27–38.
- 12 See Joseph Chamie, *Religion and Fertility: Arab Christian-Muslim Differentials* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). See also Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon...*, pp. 88–9.
- 13 Val R. Lorwin, 'Belgium: Religion, Class, and Language in National Politics', in Robert A. Dahl (ed.), *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).
- 14 See, for example, Leslie Laczko, 'Canada's Pluralism in Comparative Perspective', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 17, no. 1, pp. 20–41.
- 15 Examples include India and Pakistan in Kashmir.

- 16 For a comparative historical study of Lebanese communities, see Hani Fares, *Al-Niza'at al-Ta'ifiyya fi Tarikh Lubnan al-Hadith* (Beirut: al-Ahliyya Liltawzi' wa al-Nashr, 1980). See also Georges Corm, *Géopolitique du Conflit Libanais* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 1986): 59–79; Ghassan Tuéni, *Une Guerre pour les Autres* (Paris: J. C. Lattès, 1985): 63–127; David C. Gordon, *Lebanon: The Fragmented Nation* (London: Croom Helm, 1980): 14374.
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- 18 Bernard Lewis, *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).
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- 21 See Iliya F. Harik, 'The Maronite Church and Political Change in Lebanon', in Binder (ed.), *Politics...*, pp. 31–55; Mas'ud Daher, *Al-Juzur al-Tarikiyya Lilmas'ala al-Ta'ifiyya alLubnaniyya, 1697–1861* (Beirut: Ma'had al-Inma' al-'Arabi, 1981): 107–173; See also Pierre Dib, *History of the Maronite Church* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1971).
- 22 See Richard van Leeuwen, *Notables and Clergy in Mount Lebanon: the Khazin Sheiks and the Maronite Church (1736–1840)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994).
- 23 Harik, *Politics and Change...*, p. 125.
- 24 On the Maronite College in Rome, see Nasser Gemayel, *Les Echanges Culturels entre les Maronites et l'Europe: du Collège Maronite de Rome (1584) au Collège de Ayn Warqa (1789)*, 2 vols, (Beirut: n.p., 1984); *Le IV Centenaire du Collège Maronite de Rome 1584–1984*, proceedings of a conference held at the University of the Holy Spirit (Kaslik: University of the Holy Spirit, 1985). See the special issue of *al-Manara*, No. 25 (1984).
- 25 See Boutros Labaki, *Introduction à l'Histoire Economique du Liban: Soie et Commerce Extérieur en Fin de Période Ottomane, 1840–1914* (Beirut: Publications de l'Université Libanaise, 1984); Chevallier, *La Société...*; Claude Dubar and Salim Nasr, *Les Classes Sociales...*; Toufic Tuma, *Paysans et institutions Féodales chez les Druzes et les Maronites du Liban du XVII Siècle à 1914*, 2 vols (Beirut: Publications de l'Université Libanaise, 1971).
- 26 See Boutros Labaki, *Education et Mobilité Sociale dans la Société Multicommunautaire du Liban. Approche Socio-Historique* (Deutsches Institut Für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung, 1988): 6–72.
- 27 See Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth Century Beirut* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).
- 28 See M. Jouplain (Pseud), *La Question du Liban: Etude d'Histoire Diplomatique et de Droit International* (Paris: Librairie Nouvelle de droit et de jurisprudence, 1908); Lyne Loheac,

Daoud Ammoun et la Création de l'Etat Libanais (Paris: Klincksieck, 1978); Yusif al-Sawda, *Fi Sabil al-Istiqlal* (Beirut: Dar al-Rihani Liltiba'a wa al-Nashr, 1967).

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- 30 See Meir Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); 38–96; Georges Adib Karam, *L'Option Publique Libanaise et la Question du Liban (1918–1920)* (Beirut: Publications de l'Université Libanaise, 1981).
- 31 For general works on the Druze, see Robert Brenton Betts, *The Druze* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Nejla M. Abu-Izzeddin, *The Druzes; A New Study of their History, Faith and Society* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984); see also Salibi, *The Modern History...* See also 'Abbas Abu Salih and Sami Makarim, *Tarikh al-Muwahidin al-Duruz al-Siyasi ft alMashriq al-'Arabi* (Beirut: Manshurat al-Majlis al-Durzi Lilbuhuth wa al-Inma', 1980).
- 32 See Edmond Rabbath, *La Formation Historique du Liban Politique et Constitutionnel, Essai de Synthèse* (Beirut: Publications de l'Université Libanaise, 1986): 349–454.
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- 34 On Arabism in the late Ottoman period, see Mahmoud Haddad, 'The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 26 (1994): 201–22. See also Rashid Khalidi (ed.), *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
- 35 See Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism. The Politics of Damascus, 1860–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- 36 C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism, Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973).
- 37 See David Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Avon Books, 1989): 143–4, 339–40.
- 38 Hourani, 'Lebanon: The Development...', p. 140.
- 39 On the National Pact, see Farid el Khazen, *The Communal Pact of National Identities. The Making and Politics of the 1943 National Pact*, papers on Lebanon, No. 12 (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1991). See also Basim al-Jisr, *Mithaq 1943; Limaza Kan Wa Limaza Saqat* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar Lilnashr, 1978).
- 40 Farid el Khazen, *The Communal Pact...*, pp. 6–38.
- 41 On the favourable international scene for the making of the National Pact, see A. B. Gaunson, *The Anglo-French Clash in Lebanon and Syria, 1940–1945* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1987).
- 42 See Chapter 9: The Porous Lebanese State and the Arab State System, pp. 110–123.
- 43 On the 1958 crisis, see, for example, Fahim I. Qubain, *Crisis in Lebanon* (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1961); Kamal Salibi, 'The Lebanese Crisis in Perspective', *The World Today* (September 1958): 369–80.

- 44 See Kemal Karpat, 'The Ottoman Ethnic and Confessional Legacy in the Middle East', in Milton J. Esman and Itamar Rabinovich (eds), *Ethnicity, Pluralism, and the State in the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988): 35–53.
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- 46 See Zamir, *The Formation...*, pp. 38–96. See also the account of Shia self-image and role as reflected in *al-Irfan*, Tarif Khalidi, 'shaykh Ahmad 'Arif al-Zayn and al-'Irfan', in Marwan R. Buheiry (ed.) *Intellectual Life in the Arab East, 1890–1939* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981): 110–24.
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- 48 On Shia politics and the attitude of the religious and political elites towards the Lebanese State on the eve of its formation in 1920, see Waddah Sharara, *Al-Umma al-Qaliqa. Al-'Amiliyyun wa al-'Asabiyya al-'Amiliyya 'Ala 'Atabat al-Dawla al-Lubnaniyya* (Beirut: Dar al Nahar, 1996). See also Fahs, *al-Shi'a...*, pp. 51–5.
- 49 Fahs, *Al-Shi'a*, pp. 70–103.
- 50 See Yusif Salem, *Khamsun Sana Ma'al-Nas* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar Lilnashr, 1975): 678.
- 51 See Sa'id Mrad, *Al-Haraka al-Wihdawiyya fi Lubnan Bayn al-Harbayn al'Alamiyyatayn, 1916–1946* (Beirut: Ma'had al-Inma' al-'Arabi, 1986): 143–254.
- 52 Sabri Hamadeh ran against Greek Catholic candidate Yusif Salem in 1944 and won. But in 1946 Hamadeh lost against Greek Orthodox candidate Habib Abu Shahla. See Fares, *Al-Niza'at al-Ta'ifiyya...*, pp. 177–8.
- 53 On the crisis of the Shia religious establishment in Lebanon in the first half of the twentieth century, see Waddah Sharara, *Dawlat Hizbollah. Lubnan Mujtama'n Islamiyyan* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 1996): 23–54. See also Fares, *Al-Niza'at al-Ta'ifiyya...*, pp. 111–30.
- 54 See Khuri, *From Village...*, pp. 21–62.
- 55 Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987): 13–36. See also Majid Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied. Musa al-Sadr and the Shia Community* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992).
- 56 On the parliamentary elite, see Samir Khalaf, 'The Parliamentary Elite', in *Lebanon's Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987): 121–45.
- 57 See Fares, *Al-Niza'at al-Ta'ifiyya...*, pp. 127–30.
- 58 Ajami, *The Vanished Imam...*, pp. 96–7.
- 59 Fahs, *Al-Shi'a...*, p. 51. Referring to the conference of Hujair in 1920. See also Sharara, *Dawlat Hizbollah...*, pp. 55–83.
- 60 Sharara, *Ibid.*, pp. 79–81.
- 61 On Musa al-Sadr's discourse, see Jean Aucagne, 'L'Imam Moussa Sadr et la Communauté Chiite', *Travaux et Jours*, No.53 (October–December 1974): 31–51. For a chronological account of the Movement of the Deprived and Sadr's political activism since 1973, see Thom Sicking and Shireen Khairallah, 'The Shi'a Awakening in Lebanon: A Search for Radical Change in a Traditional Way', *CEMAM Report* 1974, vol. 2, 1975, pp. 97–130.
- 62 Sharara, *Dawlat Hizbollah...*, pp. 103–27.
- 63 See Salim Nasr and Theodor Hanf, *Urban Crisis and Social Movements: Arab and European Perspectives* (Beirut: The Euro-Arab Social Research Group, 1987): 141–74.

- 64 See Mustapha Jeha, *Sajin al-Sahra'* (Beirut: n.p. 1988): 707–12.
- 65 See Fouad Ajami, 'Lebanon and its Inheritors', *Foreign Affairs* 63 (Spring 1985): 778–99.
- 66 See Sharara, *Dawlat Hizbollah...*, pp. 195–388.
- 67 Ajami, *The Vanished Imam...*, p. 189.
- 68 This deserves thorough exploration, something which cannot be covered in this study.

4

Varying Paths to Communal *Za'ama*

Maronite and Sunni

In pre-war Lebanon, the Maronite and Sunni communities were the most active politically both in domestic politics and in foreign relations, particularly with Arab countries. This began prior to independence and continued afterwards. More so than other Lebanese communities, the political and social bases of their communal leadership had a significant bearing on the political process, notably the impact of pan-Arab politics on the elites and on their respective masses.

The Maronite Community

In comparison with other communities, the Maronite has known the highest turnover rate in communal leadership and has had one of the most diversified socio-political bases of elite recruitment.¹ Partly because of its historical communal development and partly because of specific socio-political factors, discussed in the previous chapter, the Maronite community has had the most heterogeneous political audience and leadership.

While traditional sources of leadership provided the preliminary stamp of legitimacy to communal *za'ama*, the process by which *za'ama* was achieved differed among Maronite leaders. The political careers of men like Bechara el-Khoury, Camille Chamoun, Fouad Chehab, Pierre Gemayel and Elias Sarkis reflect the varying paths to communal leadership. Maronite leaders have acquired *za'ama* status through: (i) the imperative of communal security; (ii) elected political office and/or service in state bureaucracy; (iii) traditional bases of authority, and (iv) organised political parties.

Since no abrupt revolutionary changes have shaped the historical evolution of the Maronite community, traditional modes of social organisation have prevailed in different forms and in response to various stimuli. The political ascendancy of the Christian bourgeoisie, generated by decades of gradual social change in Mount Lebanon, altered the pattern of communal organisation, though not the style and substance of political competition. The elimination of the *iqta'* system in the 1860s did not really terminate the *iqta'* approach to communal politics.²

A new generation of Western-educated Christian politicians began to emerge from the late 19th century and challenged the authority of both the church and of the established families; they quickly embraced the political style and organisation prevalent during the *Mutasarrifiyya* period. As this new elite was integrated into the political process, its legitimacy was established on bases somewhat similar to those that facilitated the rise of the previous elite.³ As a result, new 'ruling families' were established and the 'hereditary' succession in political office took root in the political process.

A similar process occurred under the mandate. By then, another generation of young politicians had entered the political scene.

Consequently, their families became the bearers of communal legitimacy and leadership.⁴ This is best reflected in the political careers of Emile Eddé, Camille Chamoun and Pierre Gemayel – each having a ‘legitimate’ successor, usually the elder son, but sometimes another ambitious member of the family. In this way, some aspects of hereditary rule were maintained though within the framework of modern political institutions and under new labels.

Political recruitment also took place on a non-communal basis: either through bureaucratic state channels or on the basis of professional qualifications. Fouad Chehab’s political career, for example, was more based on his profession than communal politics. Although the descendant of a lordly family, Chehab did not seek political office through traditional means. Nor did he belong in the circle of *zu'ama*. His rise to power was due to his military career as commander of the army, an institution he helped establish. Chehab’s political legitimacy was derived from a mixture of statist and confessional sources. It was enhanced after assuming the presidency through concrete achievements. Although he never identified with any kind of populist *za'ama*, he nonetheless was viewed as such. After all, he had to play the political game in which major *zu'ama* were most at home.

Other Maronite leaders rose to political power through non-traditional channels. Indeed, two Chehabist presidents, Charles Helou and Elias Sarkis, owed much of their political prominence to professional achievements in and outside government office: Helou as a deputy, cabinet minister and diplomat, and Sarkis as a high-level state bureaucrat with a reputation for professional integrity. Neither had any communal following of his own, whether before or after the presidency, nor did they seek to have one.

Another type of leadership consisted of aspiring politicians who did not have the proper credentials to make a successful bid for power through non-bureaucratic channels. They may have had a traditional power base, but it was usually of limited potential. Or they may have had the necessary ingredients for an ambitious bid for power, such as wealth and the right connections in Lebanon and abroad, but they lacked the popular support and charisma to assert their communal leadership. The Maronite community, like other communities, had individuals who, while lacking

communal credentials, sought high political office on the basis of professional or other qualifications.⁵

The factor of corporate security in times of crisis was perhaps the most important dimension of populist *za'ama* politics. It seems that communal leadership remained deficient in the absence of a communal *za'im* who could mobilise a large, irritable crowd in defence of sectarian interests. While this is true of all communities, it is clearly discernible within the Maronite community. In times of crisis, 'strong men' are needed. They become the de facto spokesmen for their communities. As conflict intensifies, these leaders come to embody the qualities of heroism ingrained in communal mythology: physical daring, defiance of authority, the selfinflated importance of the community, and the unwavering willingness to resist and even to die for the cause.

In the Maronite community, the historical roots of communal heroism can be found in the well-developed mythology of al-Marada – a group of warriors of high repute who integrated with the Maronites in medieval times and had fought and repelled invaders.⁶ In 19th-century Mount Lebanon, the spirit of revolt was revived in *'Amiyyat Antelias* in 1840 in response to the high-handed rule of Amir Bachir II. In the early 1860s, another populist Maronite leader, Yusif Karam, emerged as the defender of communal interests through his relentless defiance of Ottoman authorities. A descendent of a northern Muqaddam family, Karam was regarded by many Maronites – until his forced exile and later after his death – as one of the greatest heroes in modern Maronite history.⁷

Under the mandate, Emile Eddé's leadership style and political agenda came to symbolise the 'Mountain hard-line communal platform, as opposed to Bechara al-Khoury's moderate and pragmatic politics. After independence, Gemayel's Kataeb Party took its 'Maronitism' to the street to confront sectarian and ideological adversaries. But it was not until the late 1950s that Pierre Gemayel, though not yet his party, gained significant Maronite support and was elevated to the rank of *za'im*.

Whereas the Kataeb Party gained communal prominence for various domestic and external reasons, Chamoun's mass popularity, especially among Christians, was largely the outcome of the stunning rise of Nasserism. Until the mid-1950s, Chamoun's Arab credentials were the best

among Maronite leaders.⁸ His election in 1952 was due in part to the reputation he acquired while championing Arab causes in international circles, particularly the Palestine question. The Nasserite 'threat', beginning in the mid-1950s, which Chamoun skilfully capitalised on to enhance his popularity, made him the defender of Christian interests. In Christian eyes, particularly Maronite, Chamoun's leadership in 1958 was indispensable. 'Chamounism' was, in a sense, a communal Maronite response to Nasserism.

In the late 1960s, the Tripartite Alliance, known as 'al-Hilf' (an electoral bloc led by Chamoun, Eddé and Gemayel), came to symbolise the assertion of Christian power in the face of mounting radicalism generated by the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. But it was a short-lived coalition. The agenda of the three presidential aspirants was to defeat the Chehabist political establishment and to gain a majority in the 1968 Chamber, due to elect the next president in 1970. But none of the 'Hilf' leaders was elected to the presidency. Instead, a centrist deputy, Suleiman Frangiyeh, became president. For some, Frangiyeh's election was viewed as a victory against Chehab and the military establishment. For others, it was viewed as a long overdue demonstration of virility (*rujula*) to assert state authority in the face of increasing PLO defiance.

In the war years, the Kataeb Party formed the backbone of the Christian militias against the PLO and its Lebanese supporters. The war produced a different kind of populism, radical and militarised. It also produced a different breed of communal leaders. One such leader was Bachir Gemayel who, at the time of his assassination in September 1982, a few days after his election to the presidency, was perhaps one of the most charismatic and popular Christian communal figures in war-time Lebanon.

The Sunni Community

Unlike the Maronites, the Sunni sought communal security in the memories of ancient Arab and Islamic glories and in the hope of a revival of that momentous past. After the Second World War, the revitalisation of Arab political predominance took the form of several nationalist-ideological platforms and was identified with those leaders who mobilised the masses. Prominent among them was Nasser. In the eyes of the Arab masses, Nasser not only defended Arab national interests and opposed colonialism, he also sought to bring about Arab unity.

Lebanon's Sunni masses felt betrayed in the 1920s and 1930s by Lebanon's 'amputation' from what they perceived as a united Arab nation artificially divided by Western colonial rule. In the open political environment of Lebanon, unlike other Arab countries, dissatisfaction could be expressed publicly. For the average Sunni, the cause of pan-Arabism could be won by an Arab leader of Nasser's stature. His political discourse and nationalist slogans aroused a strong emotional response on the part of people drawn from all walks of life: the urban shopkeeper, the neighbourhood *qabaday*, the backgammon player in the city's cafés, religious leaders and, of course, established *zu'ama*.

A Sunni *za'im* is usually the most influential man in the locality: the city, a small quarter in the city, or a rural area. The *za'im*'s popularity is based on a network of patronage and on other factors, notably his family's prominence in local communal politics:⁹ the Karames in Tripoli, the Salams in Beirut and the Mer'abis in 'Akkar.¹⁰ The *za'im*'s influence is confined to communal rivalries involving local and national politics rather than to issues affecting pan-Arab politics.

The Sunni *za'ama* base is comparatively less diversified than that of the Maronite. Apart from the traditional bases of communal *za'ama* (e.g. Solh, Salam, Karame), two other channels of recruitment and political prominence were important: elected political office and/or local political prominence and the office of the prime minister (e.g. 'Abdallah al-Yafi, Hussein al-'Uweini, and after 1975 Salim al-Hoss and Shafiq al-Wazzan). In pre-war Lebanon, these politicians managed well in non-crisis situations. Otherwise, the *aqtab*, the 'heavy-weight' *zu'ama*, notably Rashid Karame

and Sa'eb Salam in the 1960s and 1970s, were called upon to deal with issues of greater complexity, as was the case in the seven-month crisis in 1969 and in the first half of the 1970s.

Another channel of communal *za'ama*, that of political parties, was less effective in the Sunni than in the Maronite community. No major Sunni leader rose to political prominence through the vehicle of a political party. Sunni-based political parties were mostly small groupings formed by established politicians prior to their involvement in party politics. The National Appeal Party (Hizb al-Nida' alQawmi), established in the mid-1940s by Kazim al-Solh, and other Sunni-based parties like the National Organisation Party (Hizb al-Hai'a al-Wataniyya), were loose coalitions of Sunni notables with limited mass support. There were also provincial parties drawing support mainly from the locality where the leader of the party is based: 'Adnan al-Hakim's Najjada Party in Beirut, Ma'ruf Sa'd's Nasserite party in Saida, Kamal Shatila's Nasserite party in Beirut and Faruq al-Muqaddam's 'October 24 Movement' in Tripoli. This contrasts sharply with the broad base of party politics within the Maronite community.

The pan-Arab political orientation of the Sunni community gave its leaders limited room for manoeuvre. Unlike other groups whose communal populism derived mainly from domestic sources and thus could be contained, Sunni populism had a strong regional dimension. While the Maronite elite embraced a broad and differentiated vision of both Lebanonism and Arabism (Chehab versus Chamoun versus the Kataeb Party), the Sunni elite was constrained by pan-Arab politics. In crises with a pan-Arab dimension, the political base of even the most established Sunni *za'im* is shaken by the populism of influential Arab rulers.

In the 1940s, Riad al-Solh was able to defend Lebanon's case in Arab circles, namely, its independence and special status within the predominantly Muslim Arab world. From the 1950s onward, the 'Hajj' of Sunni leaders, wrote Ghassan Tuéni, 'began to Damascus, Faruq's Cairo, Riyadh, Baghdad, then to Nasser's undisputed leadership, who bestowed and denied *za'ama* in Lebanon to whomever they wanted ... so that today [1973] championing the Palestinian cause has become the rule and the norm.'¹¹ But Riad al-Solh was exceptional partly because of his

involvement in pan-Arab politics prior to becoming a Lebanese *za'im* and partly because he belonged to the first generation of a socially and politically homogeneous and moderate Arab elite.

Riad al-Solh's political career was unique among Lebanon's Sunni leaders.¹² He earned his credentials as an Arab nationalist prior to independence in 1943 as a leading figure in the nationalist circles of Damascus during the mandate period, where the most radical groups of Arab nationalists were based. When he later opted for the independent Lebanon platform, though with an 'Arab face', no Lebanese (or even Arab) leader was in a position to oppose him and to criticise him on the basis of his poor Arab nationalist credentials. After 1943 no Sunni leader could challenge Solh's stand, including the two prominent Sunni Arab nationalists of the mandate period, Abdul-Hamid Karame and Salim Salam. Sunni opposition to Solh had little effect since he received support from Damascus and other Arab countries as well as the backing of the British, who sought to undermine French influence in Lebanon.

The 'case' of Riad al-Solh in Sunni communal politics as well as in broader Lebanese politics raises a central question regarding the linkage between Sunni *za'ama* politics and Arab nationalist politics: could post-independence Lebanon have produced Sunni leaders capable of challenging Arab nationalist leaders over issues having to do with national sovereignty? Could Sunni leaders confront an Arab leader or regime in times of a crisis relating to pan-Arabism while maintaining popular support and communal legitimacy? How would Riad al-Solh, for instance, have fared – had he lived – during the heyday of Nasserism in the 1950s? How would he have responded to the 1958 crisis, and how different would his role have been from that of other Sunni leaders? Would Solh, who was instrumental in achieving independence, have stood up to Nasser who revolted against the generation of Arab nationalists with which Solh identified?¹³

Assuming, for the sake of argument, that Sunni leaders were willing to challenge Nasser's pan-Arab agenda by drawing the line between the Egyptian president's forceful drive and the imperatives of national sovereignty, they were ill-prepared to do so. In the 1950s, the sons of Abdul-Hamid Karame and Salim Salam, Rashid and Sa'eb respectively, had to face Nasser's power, charisma and stature, and not the Syrian leaders

their fathers faced in the 1940s. The only Sunni dissenter in 1958 was Sami al-Solh who stood firm in the premiership alongside President Chamoun. Sami al-Solh, whose political stand ran counter to the populist Nasserite tide, ended up paying a heavy political price. His defiant attitude set an unhappy precedent which future Sunni prime ministers sought to avoid whether before or after the outbreak of war.¹⁴

Beginning in the late 1960s, Sunni leaders supported the PLO's armed struggle. After 1967 crises linked to pan-Arab power politics were qualitatively different from those of the late 1950s. They created a Vacuum in Sunni leadership', particularly when confrontations between the PLO and Lebanese authorities became recurrent.¹⁵

The uneven communal development of Lebanese society and the different political and social bases of communal *za'ama* in the Maronite and Sunni communities have had different repercussions on the political process, especially in crisis situations linked to pan-Arab politics. Another pattern of uneven communal development has had a socio-economic dimension and is associated with the role and policies pursued by the state. Socio-economic communal disparities acquired growing importance in the first half of the 1970s, particularly when viewed in the context of conflict both before and during the war. These issues are explored in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 See Iliya Harik, *Mann Yahkum Lubnan* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar Lilnashr, 1972): 15–29; Antoine Nasri Messarra, *La Structure Sociale du Parlement Libanais, 1920–1976* (Beirut: Publications du Centre de Recherches, Université Libanaise, 1977). See also Corm, *Géopolitique...* pp. 167–74.
- 2 See Samir Khalaf, *Persistence and Change...*
- 3 For a portrait of a representative of Mount Lebanon's new Maronite elite, see Loheac, *Daoud Ammoun...*
- 4 See Walid 'Awad, *Ashab al-Fakhama, Ru'sa' Lubnan* (Beirut: al-Ahliyya Lilnashr wa al-Tawzi', 1977); Farid el Khazen, 'al-Shaykh Yusif al-Khazen wa al-Nukhab al-Siyasiya fi Fatrat al-Intidab', in Fadel Sa'id 'Akl and Riad Honein (eds), *Al-Shaykh Yusif el Khazen, Fikr Sabaqa Zamanah* (Beirut: n.p., 1993): 19–30.
- 5 Several wealthy emigrants and/or wealthy businessmen have sought political office. Not all were successful. This 'tradition' began during the mandate period (e.g. Egyptian-Lebanese emigré George Lutfallah) and has continued until the present. Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and deputy Issam Fares are two contemporary examples.
- 6 See Philip K. Hitti, *Lebanon in History* (London: Macmillan, 1957): 245–6. See also Boutros Daou, *Tarikh al-Mawarina al-Dini wa al-Siyasi wa al-Hadari: al-Wajh al-'Askari al-Maruni Min 1367 Ila 1840*, (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar Lilnashr, n.p., 1981).
- 7 See John P. Spagnolo, *France and Ottoman Lebanon, 1861–1914* (London: Ithaca Press, 1977), pp. 53–125; Sim'an Khazen, *Yusif Karam Qa'imaqam Nasara Lubnan* (Jounieh: Matba'at al-Mursalin al-Lubananiyyin, 1954).
- 8 See Camille Chamoun, *Crise au Moyen-Orient* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963): 200–31.
- 9 See Arnold Hottinger, 'Zu'ama in Historical Perspective', in Binder, ed. *Politics in Lebanon*, pp. 85–105. On Sunni urban politics, see Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut: The Sunni Muslim Community and The Lebanese State, 1840–1985* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986).
- 10 On the lords of 'Akkar, see the detailed work by Michael Gilsenan, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches. Violence and Narrative in an Arab Society* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996).
- 11 Ghassan Tuéni, 'Mas'uliyyat al-Musharaka', *Al-Nahar*, 16 July 1973.
- 12 On Riad al-Solh's political career and assassination by a member of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in 1951, see Waddah Sharara, 'Munzu Arba'een 'Aman Ightila Riad alSolh', *Al-Hayat*, 11 and 12 August 1991, p. 8.
- 13 I put this question to Munah al-Solh. According to him, had Riad al-Solh lived to witness the rise of Nasserism in the mid-1950s, he would not have clashed with Nasser. In Munah al-Solh's opinion, Riad was a firm believer in Egypt's leading role in Arab politics. Interview, 10 September 1994.
- 14 See Karim Pakradouni, *La PaixManquée. Le Mandat d'Elias Sarkis (1978–1982)*, (Beirut: Editions FMA, 1984): 109.
- 15 See Salim al-Lawzi, *Al-Hawadess* No. 963, 25 April 1975, pp. 4–5. See also in the same issue 'Harb Baqa' al-Tatarruf', pp. 6–7.

5

Communal Disparities and State Policies

That Lebanon's communal development was uneven need not mean that the state played no role in bridging the gap between the communities. Indeed, the state pursued policies which helped narrow differences, though state intervention was confined more to the socio-economic domain than to communal politics.

Pre-war government policies were not devised with the aim of depriving particular communities while intentionally seeking to bring benefits and rewards to others. Rather, the state neglected particular regions in the country, particularly peripheral areas, such as the northern 'Akkar region, inhabited by people from Christian and Muslim communities. Other neglected regions had a high concentration of Shia, particularly in the south and the Beqa. Government neglect was not restricted to peripheral regions but also to the centre where there is a Christian majority. The districts of Batroun and Jbeil, which are predominantly Maronite, were as neglected by the state as regions of the periphery. The areas that benefited most from infrastructure building and government services (roads, electricity, telephone and other services) were Beirut and its surrounding areas in Mount Lebanon ('Aley, Matn, Kisirwan) inhabited by Christian and Muslim communities, though least by the Shia, as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Place of Residence by Sect and Region (1974)

	Beirut	Suburb	Other Cities	Mount Lebanon	North	South	Beqa
Sunni	23.5	8.7	36.7	1.3	42.8	0.4	16.9
Shia	16.1	32.9	16.6	0.3	0.0	50.9	40.4
Druze	5.2	1.4	5.1	16.8	0.0	0.0	1.0
Maronites	22.6	26.2	20.4	66.5	32.0	31.4	27.3
Greek Orthodox	17.2	8.9	10.6	5.2	24.1	0.0	1.0
Greek Catholic & Armenians	15.2	21.6	10.3	9.6	0.9	17.1	13.1

Source: Yves Schemed, 'Sociologie du Système Politique Libanais', doctoral dissertation, Université de Grenoble II, 1976, p. 64.

In internal communal politics, the state did not intrude in areas regarded as the traditional preserve of communities, such as the political and religious power structures. Policies of state patronage helped enhance the power of established communal leaders vis-à-vis their rivals who were not able to alter the existing power equation within the community. While some communities were comparatively more penetrable than others, only limited change was induced by the state. If, for instance, there was room for manoeuvre within the Maronite and Sunni communities, little could be done with the Druze whose dual political leadership, dating back to the *Imam*, was too rigid and too insular for the state to be able to alter the basis of its communal power structure.

The one attempt to influence, albeit indirectly, the power equation of internal communal politics was made by the Chehabist establishment. This involved the support for a new political platform within the Shia community through the backing of Musa al-Sadr. This tacit intervention by the state was intended neither to repress nor to control, but to provide a political alternative to the traditional leadership of the community. This attempt was particularly important because Sadr's bid for power had an unambiguous sectarian dimension linked to a long-term political agenda that went beyond the rivalry between government and opposition.

Communally-Generated Change in Pre- and Post-1920 Lebanon Disparities between the centre and the periphery predated the formation of the modern state.

So did the social and economic organisation of these areas. This was the conclusion reached by Dubar and Nasr in their study of social classes in Lebanon before the outbreak of war in 1975. In their words: Au début de la période du mandat, les structures agraires des deux zones amalgamées dans le cadre de l'Etat libanais étaient donc nettement différenciées. A la Montagne, une petite propriété qui s'émiette sans cesse, des paysans pauvres, des biens d'Eglise larges et prospères (un tiers des meilleures terres), une émigration considérable. Dans les régions périphériques, une grande propriété souvent indivisées, un domaine public étendu (hérité des terres sultaniennes), une petite propriété marginale et menacée surtout dans la proximité des bourgs, une exploitation quasi féodale de métayers privés de beaucoup de droits personnels et politiques. Deux histoires rurales, deux mondes ruraux décalés, mais un Etat et un marché intégré, à travers Beyrouth, au marché mondial et au capital financier et commercial français.¹

Notwithstanding regional disparities, due in part to Lebanon's uneven historical development both before and after 1920, socio-economic changes have had a bearing on communal differences. There are two ways to assess the impact of such transformations on the various communities. One is to look at the data at a particular point in time, say in the early 1970s in the period that immediately preceded the war, and draw particular conclusions

about communal differences in Lebanon's socio-economic development. The other is to assess change over a long period of time and see whether or not it mitigated or accelerated disparities between the communities.

Prior to 1920, change was to a large extent communally-generated. The two major communities in Mount Lebanon, the Druze and the Maronites, went through social, economic and political changes which were internally generated and in response to factors not linked to the state (then the Ottoman government), particularly in the non-political domain.² After 1920, change was in part generated by the French-controlled state. It is only after independence in 1943 that state development policies became strictly Lebanese and were subject to various internal considerations.

Before the modern state was formed, communal transformation, which occurred over a period of more than three centuries, was most visible in Mount Lebanon and the Maronites were the community most affected by the change. Change unfolded irrespective of the formation of the state of Greater Lebanon. Had the Ottoman Empire lasted longer – a few more years or several decades this would not have halted the process of communally-generated change within Mount Lebanon, particularly within the Christian communities.

The starting point for our analysis of communal differences in modern Lebanon begins with the formation of the state in 1920. This constituted the first attempt at state intervention in the social and economic domains. The mandate period (1920–43) saw the emergence of a public space in Lebanon, as opposed to the private (or communal) space. This was the first phase of state-building in post-1920 Lebanon. The second began with independence in 1943 and ended in the mid-1970s following the outbreak of war. During that phase, President Chehab launched the most systematic policy of government planning and state intervention that pre-war Lebanon had known. It resulted in significant achievements in institutional state-building and in socio-economic development. While an analysis of the socio-economic policies of the state from independence to the mid-1970s falls beyond the scope of this study, four areas of communally-generated change will be highlighted: occupation, education, literacy rate and income distribution.³

Occupation

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 show the occupational distribution by region and confessional group in the last two decades of Ottoman rule. Table 5.2, which covers the number of persons involved in the medical profession in 1908, shows an overwhelming Christian majority both in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, then under the *Mutasarrifiyya*. Similarly, Table 5.3 shows an overall Christian predominance in trade, insurance, banking and related occupations.

Table 5.2 Number of Professionals by Region and Confessional Group (1908)

	Mount	Lebanon	Beirut		City of Tripoli			Beqa	
	Christ.	Musl.	Christ.	Musl.	Jews	Christ.	Musl.	Christ.	Musl.
Med. Doctors	3	1	24	4	3	-	-	2	
Dentists	3	-	8	1	-	-	-		
Pharmacists	13	0	12	5				2	0
Lawyers	37	12	15	3		1	3	3	0
Engineers	1	0	1	0					

Source: Boutros Labaki, *Education et Mobilité Sociale Dans La Société Multicommunautaire du Liban. Approche Socio-Historique* (Deutsches Institut Für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung, 1988): 65.

Table 5.3 Occupational Distribution by Region and Confessional Group (End of Ottoman Period)

	Year	Region	Christians no.	Christians %	Muslims no.	Muslims %
Merchants	1889	Beirut	77	86.5	12	13.5
Merchants	1908	Beirut & Beqa	178	58.0	134	43.0
Importers	1914	Beirut	51	63.7	29	36.2
Silk Exporters	1911	Beirut	62	81.0	5	19.0
Wool Exporters	1914	Beirut	2	66.0	1	33.0
Bankers	1889	Beirut	11	84.6	2	15.4
Bankers	1914	Tripoli	0	0	2	100.0
Insurance Brokers*		Beirut	11	61.1	7	38.8
Shipping Agents	1914	Beirut	9	75.0	3	25.0
Silk Manufacturers	1911	All Lebanon	171	92.0	15	8.0

* Year not specified in source.

Source: Boutros Labaki, 'Confessional Communities, Social Stratification and Wars in Lebanon', *Social Compass*, XXXV, 4, (1988): 544.

Table 5.4 shows the evolution of occupational distribution over a period of four decades, from the early 1940s to the early 1980s. In all occupations,

commercial and professional, the gap between Christians and Muslims decreased significantly. For example, in the 1940s local ownership of the banking sector (as opposed to foreign-owned banks) was all Christian. Three decades later, Muslim ownership was up by 35 per cent. Similarly, the proportion of engineers in the 1940s was 88 per cent Christian and 12 per cent Muslim. In 1983, it became 59 per cent Christian and 41 per cent Muslim. In the medical profession, the proportion of Muslims increased from 13.4 per cent in the 1940s to 37 per cent in 1983, and that of the Christians went down from 86 per cent to 63 per cent.

Table 5.4 Occupational Distribution by Confessional Group 1943–83*

	% Muslims	% Christians	% Muslims	% Christians
Civil Servants Owners of Commercial Enterprises	41.3	58.7	47.32	52.68
Bankers	22.0	78.0	35	65
Owners of Transport Companies	0.0	100.0	35	65
Insurers and Insurance Brokers	28.0	72.0	26	74
Industrialists	9.0	91.0	15	85
Lawyers	33.0	67.0	44	56
Engineers	13.5	86.5	25	75
Medical Doctors	12.0	88.0	41	59
	13.4	86.6	37	63

*Selected years are used for comparison because of the availability of data.

Source: Boutros Labaki, *Education et Mobilité Sociale...*, p. 145.

Education

In the field of education, specifically in terms of the number of students and educational institutions, the gap between Christians and Muslims was initially wide, but became smaller over the years.

During the *Mutasarrifiyya*, the student population in Mount Lebanon was overwhelmingly Christian (95 per cent), with the Maronites constituting the largest proportion (34 per cent), as shown in Table 5.5. The remaining 5 per cent were Druze and Sunni. Likewise the number of Christian-run schools was 245 while the number of Druze and Sunni-run schools was 18, as shown in Table 5.5. The number of Maronite schools was larger than the total number of schools run by all the communities combined (3573 versus 3446). After the Maronites came the Protestants, followed by the Latin, Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic communities.

Table 5.5 Number of Schools and Students in Mount Lebanon by Region, Sect and Sex (1882)

	Schools	Males	Females	Total
Region				
Koura	14	538	–	538
Batroun	51	1294	–	1294
Kisirwan	47	1146	115	1261
Matn	65	2021	389	2410
Shouf	55	1943	412	2355
Deir al-Qamar	7	101	230	331
Jezzin	4	90	–	90
Zahleh	20	632	452	1084
Total	263	7765	1598	9363
Sect				
Greek Orthodox	14	650	–	650
Greek Catholic	12	644	155	799
Maronite	135	3573	135	3708
Latin	27	910	640	1550
Protestant	57	1440	668	2108
Druze	10	424	–	424
Sunni	8	124	–	124
Total	263	7765	1598	9363

Source: Boutros Labaki, *Education et Mobilité Sociale...*, p. 183.

In Table 5.5 we see that the female student population was highest in the Zahleh and Shouf regions. In Deir al-Qamar female students were more than double the number of male students, and in Zahleh the proportion of female students was about 40 per cent of the total. In terms of distribution among

the communities, the Druze and Sunnis had no female students. Protestant and Latin-run schools had the highest number of female students.

In Table 5.6, we see that the Sunni student population in Beirut at the turn of the century was 2500, the number of instructors 70 and the number of schools 24. By contrast, the number of Christian students in Beirut was 11,530, the number of instructors 416 and the number of schools 75, as shown in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Number of Students, Instructors and Schools in Beirut by Sect and Sex (1889)

	Female Students	Male Students	Female Instructors	Male Instructors	Girls' Schools	Boys' Schools
Sunni	500	2000	20	50	3	21
Greek Orthodox	310	900	17	21	3	6
Maronite	55	1500	3	85	1	5
Greek Catholic	–	500	–	38	–	4
Jesuits	200	1500	4	90	1	5
Sisters of Charity	2000	175	11	10	4	2
Sisters of Nazareth	500	–	20	–	20	–
Saint Vincent de Paul	–	400	–	3	–	3
Capucins	–	150	–	4	–	2
Syrian Catholic	–	100	–	2	–	1
Italian Schools	120	30	–	6	1	1
Jewish	90	500	2	25	1	5
Protestant	2390	700	90	50	20	12

Source: Boutros Labaki, *Education et Mobilité Sociale...*, p. 187.

Schools run by Latin Catholic orders in Beirut at the turn of the century had the highest number of students of both sexes, with the Jesuits and Sisters of Charity coming first, as shown in Table 5.6. Protestant missionaries had the highest number of schools and the largest student population. Local communities ran a smaller number of schools in Beirut. Their student population was also comparatively small. The Sunni had the largest number of schools and students, followed by the Greek Orthodox and the Maronites.

In 1913, seven years before the state was formed, Mount Lebanon had the following number of schools and their respective sponsors: 70 Western-run schools (French, Russian, American), 5 Ottoman schools, 20 local Lebanese

Christian-run schools and 5 other local private schools.⁴ By 1920, Lebanon had 471 Christian run schools (Maronite and Latin Catholic orders) compared with 241 Muslim-run schools.⁵ While the Sunni had 219 schools, a little fewer than the number of Maronite schools (232), the Shia and Druze had only 12 and 10 schools respectively.⁶ The largest number of private schools was located in Mount Lebanon followed by the north and the south.⁷

During the mandate, there was a marked increase in the number of Muslim students both in private and public schools. The majority of Muslim students attended public schools (80–90 per cent), while the majority of Christian students attended private schools.⁸ In the mid- 1930s, more Muslim students attended public schools than Christians although the proportion of Muslim students attending private schools (local and foreign) increased by roughly 20 per cent since the mid1920s.⁹ The vast majority of students in private foreign schools were Christians (88 per cent).¹⁰

Parallel to the expansion of numbers in public schools, an expansion took place in private schools run by various sectarian groups. Table 5.7 shows that over a period of over fifty years, the largest expansion in private schools was recorded within the Maronite and Shia communities, followed by the Sunni, Greek Catholic and the Armenian communities.

Table 5.7 Number of Private Schools Run by Sectarian Groups (1918/20 and 1977/78)

	No. of schools in 1918/20	No. of schools in 1977/78
Shia	11	137
Sunni	19	137
Druze	11	26
Total Muslims	41	300
Maronite	30	206
Greek Orthodox	33	24
Greek Catholic	7	62
Armenian Orthodox	–	33
Armenian Catholic	–	14
Armenian Protestant	–	10
Syrian Catholic	–	7
Syrian Orthodox	–	3
Latin	223	148
Protestant	158	41
Total Christians	451	548

Source: Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères. E-Levant-Syrie, Liban, Cilicie, V104 et Centre de Recherches et de Développement Pédagogique: *Statistiques de l'Education 1977–7, Beirut, 1982* in Boutros Labaki, *Education...*, p. 129.

Literacy Rates Literacy rates and educational levels have changed over the years and the gap between confessional groups has greatly decreased. Table 5.8 shows that the highest illiteracy rate in 1932 was that of the Shia community, followed by the Sunni, the Druze and the Greek Orthodox (equal) and the Maronite. The highest literacy rate was that of the Greek Catholic community.

Table 5.8 Illiteracy Rates by Sect (1932)

Community	Shia	Sunni	Druze	Druze Orthodox	Maronite	Greek Catholic
Percentage of Illiterates	83	66	53	53	48	39

Source: Boutros Labaki, *Education et Mobilité Sociale*, p. 87.

Four decades later, the proportion of illiterates and partially literate was slightly higher among Muslims, by only 1 to 3 per cent, as shown in Table 5.9. Furthermore, there was only a small difference in the levels of primary, intermediate and university education between Christians and Muslims: by 3 per cent in favour of Muslims at the primary level and by 1 to 4 per cent in favour of Christians at the intermediate and university level.

Table 5.9 Educational Levels by Confessional Group, 1974 (% of population in each group)

	Illiterate	Partially literate	Primary level	Intermediate level	University level
Muslims	14.2	18.6	32.9	27	9.1
Christians	10.9	16.9	29.0	31	10.0

Source: Yves Schemed, 'Sociologie...', p. 68.

Income Distribution An early study of income distribution in Lebanon was conducted by economist Elias Ghannagé in 1953. It showed a vast discrepancy between high and low income groups: with 78 per cent of the population earning 20 per cent of national income.¹¹

The well-known IRFED study conducted in 1959 shows that 4 per cent of the population earned 32 per cent of national income while the destitute and

poor, who made up 50 per cent of the population, earned less than 18 per cent of national income.¹²

Two other studies (Tables 5.10, and 5.11), conducted in the mid-1970s, show a marked improvement in the share of national income of middle income groups in comparison with the levels recorded a decade earlier. Table 5.11 shows income distribution in 1973–74 deflated at 1960 prices. The two income groups of rich and well-off in 1960, which correspond to the two income groups of 6150LL and above 8000LL in 1973–74, showed an expansion of the share of national income from 14 per cent in 1960 to about 26 per cent in 1973 (and about 23.5 per cent in 1974).

Table 5.10	Income Distribution (1973 and 1974)	
Average Annual in 1.1.	% of total population (1973)	% of total population (1974)
Below 3000	23.5	20.2
3000–5000	28.1	26.7
6000–12000	25.9	23.4
Above 12000	22.2	19.5

*Increase in minimum wage.

Source: Yves Schemed, ‘Sociologie...’, p. 22.

Table 5.11	Income	Distribution	Deflated	at	1960	Prices	(1973–74)
1973		1974					
Annual Average in L.L.	% of total population	Annual Average in L.L.	% of total population				
Below 2,000	23.5	below 1,850	20.2				
3,000	28.1	2,750	36.7				
6,150	25.9	5,500	23.4				
Above 8,000	22.2	above 7,350	19.5				

Source: Consumer Price Index – from Central Directorate of Statistics. Ministry of National Economy and Planning Commission in Boutros Labaki, ‘Confessional...’ p. 555.

Table 5.12 shows an improvement in the standard-of-living in Lebanon’s rural areas in various parts of the country. Over a period of ten years, there was an overall increase of 32 per cent, with the largest recorded in the south, followed by the north, the Beqa and Mount Lebanon.

Table 5.12 Change in the Standard-of-Living in Rural Districts (Mohafazat)

	Standard-of-Living index 1960	Standard-of-Living index 1970	% increase
Central*		2.59	15.6
North	2.13	2.52	40.0
South	1.53	2.20	43.8
Beqa	1.47	2.00	36.1
Rural Areas overall	1.69	2.23	32.0

* Mount Lebanon *Source*: Raymond Delprat 'Liban: Evolution du Niveau de Vie en Milieu Rural – 1960–1970', Beirut, 1970, Mimeo – Ministry of Planning, p. 9 in Boutros Labaki, 'Confessional...', p. 556.

Another indicator reflects the change that took place over a period of three decades in social services associations. Private social service associations run by sectarian groups grew significantly during a period of less than two decades, as shown in Table 5.13. The highest growth rate was recorded by the Greek Catholic community, followed by the Armenian, the Shia, the Sunni and the Maronite communities. In 1977–78, the Maronite community had the highest number of such associations, followed by the Sunni, Greek Catholic and Greek Orthodox communities.

Table 5.13 Social Service Associations by Sect (1965 and 1977–78)

	1965	1977–1978
Maronite	28	70
Greek Orthodox	42	44
Greek Catholic	7	50
Armenian	12	38
Latin	18	26
Protestant	10	14
Syrian	4	3
Chaldean	2	2
Nestorian	1	1
Sunni	26	66
Shia	13	38
Druze	11	16
Alawite	2	3

Source: Ministère du Plan, Service des Activités Régionales. Annuaire des Associations de Services Sociaux. Beirut, 1965 (in Arabic). Office du Développement Social. Annuaire des Associations de Services Sociaux. Beirut, 1977–78 in Boutros Labaki, *Education...*, p. 92.

State Policies and Public Schools

This brief account of state policies is confined to the field of pre-

university education. In the four decades after independence the number of public schools increased in various parts of the country.¹³ Table 5.14 shows that the largest increase took place in the north, followed by the Beqa and the south. The Beirut area and Mount Lebanon had the lowest number of public schools.

Table 5.14 Distribution of Public Schools by Region (1943–87 by selected years)

	Before 1943	1943–49	1950–59	1960–69	1970–75	1976–87	Total
South	28	44	30	48	14	22	186
Beqa	25	43	55	48	20	28	219
North	42	73	78	86	48	70	397
Beirut and suburbs	19	55	28	33	9	9	153
Mt Lebanon excluding suburbs	6	11	25	26	9	21	98

Source: Boutros Labaki, *Education...*, pp. 134–6. Adapted from five tables.

Over 70 per cent of public schools in 1974–75 were located in the north, south and the Beqa. Similarly, over 70 per cent of the student population were in these regions. These figures do not account for the quality of education in public schools, nor do they show the actual needs at the different levels of pre-university education. They do show, however, that public schools were built in areas where they were most needed. As Hani Fares observed, ‘because of the concentration of private schools in Christian regions, most public schools were established in Muslim areas to fill the vacuum ... in time public schools were modernised ... New government institutes were established to train teachers who would be employed in public schools significantly’.¹⁴

As we can see in Table 5.15, which shows the geographic distribution of public schools and students, the most developed areas of Lebanon (Beirut, its suburb and Mount Lebanon) had the lowest number of public schools. The number of public schools in the north, south and the Beqa was more than double the number of public schools in other parts of the country.

Public schools were built in less privileged regions and not in regions where private schooling was available and at all educational levels. In terms of the number of students per teacher the difference between the six regions was minimal.

Table 5.15 Number of Public Schools, Students and Teachers, by Region (1974–75)

Region	No. of Public Schools	No. of Students	No. of Teachers	No. of Students per teacher
Beirut	63	29554	1759	16.80
Mt Lebanon and suburbs of Beirut	98	41902	2235	18.75
Mt Lebanon excluding suburbs of Beirut	251	42450	2553	16.63
North	392	85942	4826	17.81
South	312	73389	3806	19.28
Beqa	231	44041	2578	17.08

Source: Public Schools Directory, 1974–75. Lebanese Republic. Ministry of Education and Fine Arts. Education Centre for Research and Development.

Concluding Observations This brief survey of change in occupation, education, literacy rate and income distribution shows that communal disparities in Lebanon were not induced by state policies. Most of the disparities preceded the formation of the state in 1920. They were mainly a function of the uneven socio-political and economic development of Lebanese communities.

Three periods can be singled out: pre-1920 Lebanon, the mandate and the post-independence period, when government became the sole decision-making body in socio-economic development. Prior to the formation of the state, Christian communities had more schools and a higher level of education than Muslim and Druze communities in Mount Lebanon, as well as in other areas, notably in Beirut and the Beqa. Similarly, the vast majority of professionals (doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc.) were Christians. During

the mandate, the gap between communities continued to narrow both in the field of education and in the occupational structure.

The most important changes, however, occurred after independence particularly since the late 1950s. As Theodor Hanf observed, ‘... between the creation of Lebanon and the outbreak of the war the enormously inegalitarian incorporation of classes and communities was considerably reduced, especially after 1960, when the government introduced its structural policies.’¹⁵ Disparities in all sectors narrowed significantly. Communal institutions broadened their activities and had a wider reach while they increased both in relative and absolute terms. On the eve of the war in 1975, while differences existed between the communities, all of them were better educated, had higher literacy rates, more equitable income distribution and a higher standard of living than one or two generations earlier. As for communities that had higher educational or social achievement, their performance was due more to self-generated communal resources than to state support.

Although government policies were inadequate, they nonetheless helped bridge the gap that existed initially, particularly prior to independence. In comparative terms, the record of the Lebanese state in development compared favourably with that of other Third World countries. As explained by Georges Corm: The Lebanese state has not failed more than any other state in the region, or in the Third World, in its task of economic development. Despite its liberal ideology, the state at the beginning of the 1950s began a traditional policy of developing the infrastructure in the country.... One cannot therefore claim that the Lebanese state neglected its responsibilities concerning development. Its work between 1950 and 1970 can in fact be favourably compared with that of neighbouring countries. It cannot be maintained that the Lebanese conflict was the result of the state’s deficiencies and its class policy. The Lebanese state did not adopt a strong policy of social egalitarianism, and this is particularly evident in the fiscal field dominated by indirect taxes; but those among the neighbouring countries who did adopt egalitarian policies developed a state bourgeoisie whose parasitism and corruption have been as detrimental as the social inequalities in Lebanon.¹⁶

Lebanon’s uneven communal development in the pre-war period was due to various factors. As Riad Tabbara explained:

... historically, Beirut was a Muslim city, most of the property and buildings belonged to Muslims, and thus Muslims profited most from the boom. Rising property prices created crowds of Muslim millionaires, and in their children's generation crowds of Muslim academics. The development among the Christians moved in the opposite direction. The people from the countryside lost during the boom, and the Maronites came mostly from the countryside. A new phenomenon appeared: poor Christians. The Shias were in the worst situation. They were Muslims and, therefore, historically at a disadvantage; they were rural and, therefore, did not benefit from the boom.¹⁷

Beirut and its surrounding areas were better off than the areas of the periphery mainly because it was the capital city and the country's major commercial and financial centre, and not because particular communities were favoured. Beirut and its vicinity, are inhabited by a confessionally mixed population.

In other words, the state did not pursue a policy aimed at depriving particular groups; rather it was a 'policy' of neglect. If Christian communities had comparatively higher educational achievement and higher income levels than other communities, that was not necessarily due to any preferential treatment by the state. Christian communities were active in a well-developed private sector and had diversified communal institutions which expanded and offered educational and social services without the support of the state. Some of these institutions pre-dated the 1920 state while others, established after that date, were more advanced than those run by the state.

Commenting on social inequalities in pre-war Lebanon, former Prime Minister Takiyeddin al-Solh indicated that: Christian society is more advanced than Muslim in almost all spheres, even though the Muslims have been catching up. This is chiefly because the Muslims took far longer than the Christians to open themselves to Western civilisation ... When some Muslims now accuse the Christians of enriching themselves at the expense of Muslims and exploiting them, that is false. The Christians gained their lead in the time of the Turks, through their own work and efforts.¹⁸

In a similar vein, in his study on entrepreneurs in Lebanon in the early 1960s which focused on the role of business leaders in the private sector, Yusif

Sayigh noted that 'the Christians in Lebanon have a long historical lead over other communities in finance, trade and services. Entrepreneurial tradition and institutions have been built around these sectors, and the necessary business contacts have been established for a long time.'¹⁹

Disparities also existed between Christian communities: the Maronites had more educational institutions than the Greek Orthodox, and the Greek Catholics had higher income levels than the Maronites. There were also disparities between Muslim communities: the Sunni had more educational institutions and higher income levels than the Shia. These disparities were not due to exploitation of communal resources by one community or the other.

Communal institutions, Christian and Muslim alike, expanded not because they depended on state resources. Nor was their expansion at the expense of other communities. Some communities lagged behind others, but over time the gap has continued to narrow more because of communal initiative and action than because of a development strategy pursued by the state (see table 5.13). Except for the Chehabist period, the state was, by and large, a passive actor. While it sought to promote equality between the communities, though inadequately, it did not pursue policies aimed at widening existing disparities.

One final observation in relation to the uneven development of Lebanese communities has to do with emigration which began in the second half of the 19th century.²⁰ While Tittle has been written about the influence of the emigrant colonies on Lebanon itself,' Albert Hourani has noted,' it is clear at least that remittances sent back to their families by successful emigrants have had an important effect on the country's economic and social life ...'²¹

While this falls beyond the scope of our study, suffice it to say that emigration, which began and developed outside the confines of the state, has affected Lebanese communities differently. The majority of these emigrants were Christians,²² at least in the first half of the 20th century. 'Remittances from these emigrants,' writes Elie Salem, 'help finance the education of many poor villagers and sponsor the establishment of schools, libraries and charitable organisations. The wealthier among those who return often invest in business, industry, or modern farming, another significant contribution to development and modernisation.'²³

In previous decades emigration, which helped induce social and economic change within Christian communities, has had a similar impact on Muslim communities, particularly the Shia community with its wealthy emigrants in African countries in recent years. These changes occurred outside the realm of state institutions and government policies both before and after the war.

If in communal development society was historically a determining vehicle for change, it was no less so in the period that preceded the war in the late 1960s. It was then that civil society and its institutions made their presence felt and affected the state through an unprecedented process of political mobilisation, radicalised and accelerated by the PLO armed presence. This characterised a new era in Lebanon, the age of ideology and mass politics, discussed in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 Dubar and Nasr, *Les Classes Sociales...*, p. 36.
- 2 See Chapter 3: The Uneven Communal Development of Lebanese Society, pp. 31–49.
- 3 The comparison is confined only to these four areas mainly because of the availability of data covering change over a long time span. While they are indicative of the transformation pattern within communities, other areas could be added to account for the change.
- 4 Labaki, *Education...*, p. 184.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 185.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 53.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 Labaki, 'Confessional Communities...', p. 554.
- 12 République Libanaise, Ministère du Plan, Mission IRFED, Besoins et Possibilités du Développement au Liban. Vol. II – Beirut (1960–61): 93, in Boutros Labaki, *Social Compass*, p.35.
- 13 At the university level, private institutions were dominant. But with the establishment of the Lebanese University by the government in 1953 and its expansion in the 1960s and 1970s, it attracted the largest number of students in the country. On university education in Lebanon see 'Adnan al-Amin (ed.), *Al-Ta'lim al-'Ali fi Lubnan* (Beirut: Al-Hai'a al-Lubnaniyya Lil'ulum al-Tarbawiyya, 1997).
- 14 Fares, *Al-Niz'at al-Ta'iftya...*, p. 150.
- 15 Han f, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon...*, p. 110.
- 16 Georges Corm, 'Myths and Realities of the Lebanese Conflict', in Shehadi and Haffar (eds), *Lebanon...*, pp. 262–3.
- 17 Cited in Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon...*, p. 396. See also Riad Tabbarah, 'Background to the Lebanese Conflict' *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* (March–June 1979): 101–21.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 374–5.
- 19 Yusif A. Sayigh, *Entrepreneurs of Lebanon. The Role of the Business Leader in a Developing Economy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962): 70.
- 20 See Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi (eds), *The Lebanese in the World. A Century of Emigration* (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Tauris, 1992).
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 22 Gordon, *Lebanon...*, p. 112.
- 23 Elie A. Salem, *Modernization...*, p. 29.

6

The Age of Ideology and Mass Politics

The first half of the 1970s witnessed an unprecedented pattern of internal change which marked Lebanon's entry into the age of ideology and mass politics. This was manifested in a high degree of political mobilisation of the institutions of civil society: notably, political parties, labour unions and university students. This overlapped with the entry of the PLO factor into Lebanese politics and the radicalisation process it generated.

Political parties of all ideological and political orientations were engaged in large scale mobilisation, recruitment and propaganda activities in various parts of the country.¹ Beginning in the late 1960s, Leftist parties were growing fast. Their power base was expanding within all communities. This was a time when Lebanon witnessed the rise of radical parties espousing various ideological platforms: Marxist, Leninist, Maoist, Trotskyite. They were influenced by the revolutionary movements in Third World countries as well as by the Vietnam war and by student activism in Western countries. The political and ideological rivalry between China and the Soviet Union also contributed to the radicalism and fragmentation of Leftist groups in Lebanon.

Established in the mid-1920s, the Lebanese Communist Party was one of the oldest parties in Lebanon. But it was not the most active nor, of course, the most influential. The Lebanese Communist Party's political fortunes were a function of various internal and external factors related to its links with the Soviet Union, its initial anti-Arab stance and the limited popular appeal of Communist ideology. Party candidates took part in most parliamentary elections held after independence, though the party was

officially banned. But it never succeeded in winning a seat. The turning point for the party's activism was in the late 1960s. The party now identified closely with Arab causes and was influenced by the 1967 war. Beginning in 1968 the party established strong ties with Fateh which provided military training for party members. In 1969, the party formed an armed unit called the 'Popular Guard' which was part of support units to Palestinian guerrillas in Jordan.²

In the eyes of the more militant New Left, the Lebanese Communist Party looked like an establishment party, traditional and rigid.³ One such militant party was the Organisation of Communist Action founded in May 1971 and led by Mohsin Ibrahim. Initially a merger of two groupings, the Organisation of Communist Action attracted a large number of student activists and intellectuals drawn from various social backgrounds and communities. This was also a time when a new Marxist political literature emerged to account for Lebanon's political and economic ills, stressing the links between the confessional system and capitalist exploitation by the bourgeoisie.⁴ In addition, the political thought and activism of the New Left centred on the Palestinian revolution. It was viewed as the main vehicle for the rise of 'new revolutionary forces' in the Arab world.⁵

Arab nationalist parties were equally active, notably the pro-Iraqi Ba'th Party, which expanded in the first half of the 1970s. One of its leading figures in Lebanon, Abdul-Majid Rifa'i, won a seat in parliament in the 1972 election. Likewise, Nasserite parties had an important following. Nasserite candidate Najah Wakim, running for the first time in a parliamentary election and against a list headed by Prime Minister Sa'eb Salam, won in the 1972 election.

The Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) also made political headway during this period. But it was a different party, both politically and ideologically, from those of the 1940s and 1950s. Party leaders were released from jail in 1969–70, having served a sentence since 1962 following the party's abortive coup against President Chehab. After their release, party leaders began to reorganise the party. 'Abdallah Sa'adeh, who led the party at the time of the coup, was elected party head in May 1969. Under Sa'adeh's and later In'am Ra'ad's leadership, the SSNP underwent drastic political and ideological change.⁶ The party now identified closely

with Arab nationalist issues. This was a departure from the party's initial anti-Arab stand and opposition to Nasser in the 1950s. The party's new platform was officially adopted by a party conference held in December 1969 at the Melkart hotel in Beirut. The conferees stressed support for the armed struggle and advocated close co-ordination with the PLO.⁷

Prior to the conference, party head 'Abdallah Sa'adeh had initiated contact with the Palestinian leadership. This was in the summer of 1969 when Sa'adeh went to Jordan and met with Fateh leaders Abu Iyad, Khalid al-Hassan, Abu Yusif al-Najjar and Abu Hassan.⁸ Fateh leaders proposed that they would contribute weapons and money to the SSNP for the purpose of preparing a coup in Lebanon.⁹ Sa'adeh opposed this suggestion and emphasised the objective of supporting the Palestinian Resistance as a national revolutionary movement.¹⁰ He then met with Arafat and they both agreed to have party members join the Resistance under Fateh's command.¹¹ For this purpose, two committees were formed to co-ordinate action. In the 1970s, through its support to the PLO, the SSNP established close ties with Leftist parties and with radical Arab regimes, particularly Libya.

Beginning in 1968, military training by Fateh became an organised operation in which various Lebanese parties and groupings were involved. There were also Lebanese recruits who joined Fateh and other Palestinian organisations without the intermediary of a political party. While training and military operations took place initially in Jordan, they gradually moved to Lebanon, particularly after 1971 when the PLO established itself there.

While a thorough discussion of the political and ideological transformations that marked party politics in Lebanon since the late 1960s falls beyond the scope of this study, the issue on which Leftist and nationalist parties were in agreement was support for the Palestinian Resistance; they were, however, at odds on many other political and ideological issues. And the organisation with which they operated closely was Fateh. If it was in vogue to be Leftist in the first half of the 1970s, it was equally in vogue to take part in the armed struggle.

Similarly, during that period Lebanon's labour unions were highly politicised and active in various economic sectors. In the 1970s, the social question was given an ideological dimension and a political platform never

experienced before in Lebanon. In 1970 several unions were formed representing the interests of farmers and workers. Unions were increasingly vocal and militant, while strikes were frequent in 1972 and 1973.¹² There were also violent confrontations with security forces in Beirut and the south. Leftist parties were involved in forming political cadres within unions and in organising protest activities by workers and farmers groups.

Political restlessness was the norm for a politicised and radicalised generation of young Lebanese activists influenced by a plethora of Leftist currents from East and West. The mood of Lebanon's agitated youth in the first half of the 1970s is captured by Fawaz Traboulsi: '... all occasions were suitable for demonstrations and sit-ins. There was no subject or cause we did not demonstrate for. From objections to the Rogers Plan to Iran's occupation of the island of Abu Musa ... to all the issues having to do with Lebanese society, to support for the Palestinian cause and funeral processions of its martyrs, to opposition to attempts to liquidate the Palestinian cause, and to the "armed struggle"' ¹³ 'At times,' continues Traboulsi, 'we did not know what we were demonstrating for; repressing one demonstration led to another to object the repression of the earlier one, and so on.' ¹⁴

The novel development in the 1970s, however, was the political activism of university students. While the activism of political parties at the mass level and the politicisation of labour unions date back to the pre-independence period, though on a more limited scale than in the 1970s,¹⁵ the 'student movement' (alHaraka al-Tullabiyya) emerged for the first time in the first half of the 1970s as a forceful political actor.¹⁶

One manifestation of mass politics in Lebanon was the mobilisation of university students. Never before had Lebanon witnessed such intensity and magnitude of politicisation of university students. A thorough survey conducted by Theodor Hanf compares the political behaviour of secondary and university students in 1961 and 1971.¹⁷ While differences in the political orientation of students continued to exist along confessional and class lines, the survey showed that the majority of university students sought change and were politicised along ideological lines.¹⁸ Leftist parties recorded a significant increase from 1961 to 1971 in the four universities surveyed, notably at the Saint Joseph University where the student body is

mainly Christian.¹⁹ With the increasing number of graduates from public schools established during the Chehabist era, the Lebanese university student population went up from 4,000 in 1961 to about 17,000 in 1971.²⁰ The 'student boom' was bound to have political repercussions in the polarised politics of the first half of the 1970s.

Lebanon's four major universities – the Lebanese University which had the largest student population and the three private universities, the American University of Beirut, Saint Joseph University and the Beirut Arab University – were the scene of intense ideological politics, both party and non-party based. Beginning in 1970, the election of student councils at the Lebanese University was an event that mobilised all active political forces. It was also an indicator of political orientations in the country. Moreover, for the first time in Lebanon there emerged a student-based political movement, namely Harakat al-Wa'i, established initially at the Lebanese University. Founded in 1969 by a group of students from mainly Christian rural areas, Harakat al-Wa'i was centrist in orientation. It provided an outlet for political activism for a new generation of politically conscious students who did not subscribe to any particular political party or ideology.²¹

Similarly, private universities were the hotbed of ideological debate and political activism which, in some instances, involved violent confrontations, as at the American University of Beirut in 1971.²² While at the Lebanese University and Saint Joseph University, rivalries reflected differences in Lebanese party politics, at the American University of Beirut and Beirut Arab University, both with a large number of Palestinian and Arab students, the agenda involved Palestinian and Arab politics. In Lebanon's universities, Fateh was directly involved in various student organisations and was the most active and the most influential politically.²³

The student movement began to constitute a challenge to political parties. Partisan student activists asserted their autonomy vis-à-vis their respective parties and were even more forthcoming than party leaders. This was particularly the case of the Kataeb Party, the National Liberal Party and the Progressive Socialist Party.

The university came to play another important role both politically and socially. It was the place where students from different social backgrounds and political orientations interacted on a daily basis. More important, Beirut

was their only meeting place, particularly for the many students coming from rural areas, both Christian and Muslim, at the Lebanese University. The political process, dominated by the traditional political establishment, did not reflect the political activism which university campuses witnessed. The diversified nature of the student movement and the political momentum it gathered made it easily penetrable and, by extension, subject to manipulation by various internal and external parties.

Mass politics coincided with another radicalising factor: the coming of age of ideology in Lebanese politics. Lebanon's political scene in the early 1970s resembled in many ways the 1960s in Western countries, particularly in France. Lebanese students attending French universities were exposed to Marxism and to the student movement in the late 1960s and were influenced by it.²⁴ For them, a similar mass-based, student-led protest movement against state and communal institutions could be reproduced in Lebanon.²⁵

The common denominator shared by these groups was the rejection of the existing state of affairs.²⁶ Grand objectives, idealism and far-fetched dreams swept the imagination of a restless Lebanese youth. Leftist parties envisioned radical change not only in Lebanon but also in other Arab countries.²⁷ The vehicle for such sweeping transformation was the Palestinian revolution. For Leftist activists the post-1967 PLO was viewed as a vanguard of radical transformation in Arab societies, an advanced model of indigenous revolutionary struggle.²⁸ Rather than enhancing mutual understanding and dialogue, student activism deepened divisions and sharpened ideological differences. As expressed by Samir Frangiyeh, the world was viewed as being divided into 'black and white'.²⁹

Radicalisation was intensified by fierce competition among Arab regimes. The death of Nasser in 1970 and the retreat of Egypt from pan-Arab politics gave radical Arab regimes greater room to manoeuvre. The two rival Ba'thist regimes in Iraq and Syria widened their field of action. There was also a newcomer to radical pan-Arab politics: Libya's Mu'ammar Qaddafi. Qaddafi came to power in 1969 and quickly acquired the image of a revolutionary leader. He found in Lebanon's openness and political diversity an ideal place to make his debut in maximalist Arab nationalist politics. Qaddafi's financial backing was instrumental in the founding of the

Al-Safir daily in 1974. *Al-Safir* was the principal and most influential media outlet for Leftist parties and the PLO in the 1970s.

The 1970s were also a time when Arab regimes, both radical and conservative, had at their disposal vast financial resources. These resources were used either to export their revolutionary model, as was the case with Iraq and Libya, or to contain revolutionary exports', as was the case with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. The post-1973 oil boom enabled *nouveaux riches* Arab regimes to broaden their activities in Lebanon and to squander newly-amassed fortunes.

Divided on many political issues, what brought unity to this rather incompatible assortment of regimes, leaders and ideological platforms was support for the PLO. The more the PLO was entrenched in Lebanon, the greater Arab support it received. Fuelled by PLO activism and by Arab political and financial support, mass ideological politics and radicalism peaked in the mid-1970s.

Ironically, Lebanon's radical politics in the first half of the 1970s moved against the Arab current. As Lebanon's ideological politics drifted to maximalism, Arab regimes with the exception of Libya moved towards political realism, away from the maximalist platforms of the earlier period in the 1950s and 1960s. But realism was confined to domestic politics. It was not for export; it did not apply to inter-Arab relations, and certainly not to Lebanon.

Lebanon's Leftist and Arab nationalist parties picked up where their Arab counterparts left off a decade earlier. By then, Arab ideological-cum-nationalist politics of the pre-1967 period were a spent force. In Lebanon, however, these radical platforms were given a new lease to life. Supported and legitimised by the PLO, Leftist parties ended up reviving outdated slogans of Arab unity and worn-out platforms of radical social change. Blurred by Lebanon's free-wheeling ways, Leftist activists thought that their Lebanon experience could be repeated in other Arab countries.

In a way, the journey of pan-Arab and Leftist politics in Lebanon was made backwards. Lebanon in the first half of the 1970s re-entered the age of Arab radicalism of the 1950s and 1960s. While radicalism in Arab countries was state-imposed, in Lebanon it was society which imposed it on the state. To use Gustave Le Bon's phrase, in Lebanon the 'unconscious

crowd' took over.³⁰ Lebanon's crowd was free to be 'unconscious' and, in the process, free to go wrong and wild. But unlike Lebanon, in other Arab countries the wrong is severely punished and the right is a state preserve.

The Radicalisation of the Christian Intelligentsia

Another important internal change took place within the Christian communities. The reform movements which emerged within and outside church institutions in the 1960s were essentially protest movements.

They embodied the aspirations of a new generation of Catholic clergy and Christian youth influenced by the reformist Christian movements which emerged in the West and in other countries, notably Liberation Theology in Latin America.

For the Catholic churches, particularly the Maronite and Greek Catholic, the Vatican II Council, which began in 1962 and ended in December 1965, was a source of inspiration for reform within the institutions of the church and a source of protest against the largely conservative church hierarchy. Young priests returning to Lebanon after several years of study and service in the Vatican and in other Western countries sought to change outdated practices. They formed youth movements, engaged in social activities and took up positions on various social and political issues. In the process, they clashed with church authorities that resisted change and were not prepared for institutional reform.

Beginning in the mid-1960s, several church-based movements were formed with the aim of introducing change both within the church and at the level of society. One such movement was the Church For Our World (Kanisa Min Ajl 'Alamina). Established in 1965 by several young Maronite priests educated in European universities, the Church For Our World sought to activate spiritual life and to bring the church closer to the people. The movement, which included several energetic, reform-minded priests as well

as lay people, had significant influence in church circles, particularly among the new generation of priests.³¹

Another active and influential movement was the Mouvement Social. Founded in 1956 by Greek Catholic Bishop Grégoire Haddad, the Mouvement Social was active in the social domain. The agenda of social reform it pursued was given a moral boost by the Vatican II council's pronouncements on these issues. Haddad himself was a member of a group of Catholic bishops who issued a paper on the 'Church and Third World Countries' calling for social reforms.³² The Mouvement Social established medical centres and concentrated on the development of rural areas, particularly in Muslim villages in various parts of the country. In the early 1960s, the movement was also engaged in a campaign to reduce the price of medicine.

Unlike the Church For Our World, the Mouvement Social was gradually politicised. The turning point was the defeat of Arab armies in the 1967 war.³³ Political activism meant identification with Arab causes in the struggle to liberate Arab land occupied by Israel.³⁴ The PLO came to embody the armed struggle. Political engagement and support for the rights of the Palestinians to regain their homeland found expression in the influential journal *Afaq*, which provided a forum for heated debate on political and theological issues. Controversial views were uttered, notably by Bishop Haddad, touching on doctrinal issues. This led to a clash with church authorities and later to Haddad's resignation from his post as Greek Catholic Bishop of Beirut.³⁵

The importance of the Mouvement Social lay not only in the influence it had on a particular group of Christian activists but in the fact that it helped crystallise a body of opinion supportive of PLO armed presence in Lebanon. This in turn meant opposition to the Christian political leadership and to the church hierarchy, notably Maronite Patriarch Méouchy who warned, as early as 1969, against the destabilising repercussions of the PLO armed presence on Lebanese politics and society.

Another Christian youth movement, Jeunesse Etudiante Chrétienne (JEC), was the most actively engaged politically. Established in the late 1930s, JEC was a worldwide Christian youth movement. Its Lebanese branch was influenced by the Marxist currents that swept Europe in the 1960s and by

the Liberation Theology that emerged in Latin America.³⁶ JEC was active in Catholic schools and in universities, particularly Saint Joseph University. In 1964, it organised an international conference in Lebanon attended by 200 delegates from several Western, Latin American and African countries. The conferees emphasised the objective of a 'preferential option for the poor'.³⁷

The JEC, like other movements and political parties, was influenced by the outcome of the 1967 war. Fundamental questions were raised ranging from institutional reforms, to the role of the church in society, to issues of identity and political activism. JEC's boldest move was to hold a seminar organised by the university branch of JEC at the Christ-King convent north of Beirut. Participants included prominent religious figures, intellectuals and activists from all Christian communities.³⁸ The seminar, held on 28–31 December 1968, had a well-defined political theme: 'church and politics in Lebanon'.³⁹

The participants issued a four-point manifesto (*Manifeste de la JEC*) entitled 'the church that we reject, the church that we want'.⁴⁰ The participants rejected: (i) being part of confessional groups having narrow concerns; (ii) a church with material wealth and political power; (iii) a church that takes part in 'Lebanon's system of feudal and capitalist exploitation' and (iv) a church that is foreign to its environment and dependent on Western civilisation. Instead, what the participants wanted was: (i) a church belonging to Christ; (ii) a church that serves the will of Christ; (iii) a church that is fully engaged in the problems of the people to help them meet their economic and political aspirations and (iv) 'a church that identifies with the Arab world, takes part in its problems, struggles and aspirations ... This requires total support of the Palestinian people in its struggle to recover its right to its homeland' (*patrie*).⁴¹

The manifesto also called upon the Church and the Christians 'to participate effectively in the struggle of the Third World against all forms of political, economic and cultural colonialism.'⁴² It urged Christian institutions to take part in 'the battle against underdevelopment in Lebanon', and called upon all Christians to be politically active and to participate in movements, syndicates and political parties. The manifesto

ended by inviting Christians to work with all the segments of the population to bring about 'a radical transformation of Lebanese society'.⁴³

This statement left no room for ambiguity. It was tantamount to a declaration of war against the church and a call to the faithful for revolt. Issued by an active, influential Catholic student movement such as the JEC, the manifesto provoked strong reactions, both critical and supportive. The controversy it provoked required a further elaboration of its content by two of its leading participants, Bishop Haddad and Jesuit priest Augustin Dupré La Tour.⁴⁴ The manifesto touched on fundamental political issues such as the nature of the confessional system, national identity and the Palestinian cause.

According to Bishop Haddad, support for the Palestinian people was justified on political and humanitarian grounds.⁴⁵ First, Palestine is part of 'our [Arab] environment'. Second, Palestinian refugees are suffering. Third, the Palestinian cause is a just cause; it pertains to international and social justice. As for problems generated by the Palestinian military presence in Lebanon, Bishop Haddad saw them as 'technical' problems. They had to be handled by the Lebanese state and the army.⁴⁶ In short, Lebanese Christians should be fully engaged in the struggle to help find a just settlement for the Palestinian problem. The Arab world's 'sadness and anguish', Bishop Haddad stressed, should be shared by Lebanon's Christians.⁴⁷

The Christ-King meeting provoked a controversy within Church circles and Christian public opinion, particularly among Christian political activists and intellectuals. For the church hierarchy as well as Christian political leaders, the manifesto was too radical and greatly compromising of Lebanese national interests. One immediate reaction to the meeting was the resignation of its main organiser Salim Nasr, then a Leftist student activist, from the JEC. Other participants, notably the clerics that took part in the meeting, received criticism from their superiors. There was even an attempt by an influential prelate to have Dupré La Tour leave the country.⁴⁸ Maronite priest Hector Doueihy, who clashed with church authorities and was accused of radical views prior to the Christ-King seminar, had to leave the country and continue service abroad. Doueihy, who formed an active youth movement in his hometown Zgharta, called for a church more in tune with the people.⁴⁹

The seminar, which coincided with the Israeli raid on Beirut airport on 31 December 1968, was an alarming turn of events both for those who supported the PLO in Lebanon and for those who were against it. It symbolised the growing internal rift over PLO armed presence and was indicative of the radicalisation which swept Lebanon and deeply affected university students. JEC activities and those of other youth groups after 1967 had an agenda that went beyond issues of reforms within the church. That agenda involved support for the PLO and was set through Leftist Christian activists who had links with Fateh and other Palestinian organisations.⁵⁰ Indeed, from the late 1960s this was the prevailing mood among Lebanese Christian intellectuals active in Leftist political parties and the French-Christian intellectual circles with whom they had close ties.⁵¹

One manifestation of the French-Lebanese ties was the 1970 international conference in Beirut in support of the Palestinian cause. The 'International Conference of Christians for Palestine' was organised by French journalist Georges Montaron, editor of the weekly *Témoignage Chrétien*. The participants, who came from several countries, discussed the issue of Jerusalem and expressed support for the armed struggle and for Palestinian national rights. A follow-up committee was formed to implement the conference's resolutions.⁵² A second international conference was held in London in 1972 and reiterated support for the Palestinian cause.

Another Christian group took a stand in support of the PLO. That was the Gathering of Engaged Christians (Tajammu' al-Masihiyyin al-Multazimin), formed following the PLO-Lebanese army clashes in April–May 1973. For them, Israel was the enemy while support for the PLO was justified on political, humanistic and religious grounds.⁵³ Respected scholars like Maronite priests Michel Hayek and Youwakim Moubarak were politically active. Both were close to Kamal Jumblatt and Moubarak had links with the PLO leadership.⁵⁴

Another movement of reform was The Movement of Orthodox Youth (Harakat al-Shabiba al-Orthodoxiyya) within the Greek Orthodox Church. It was founded in 1942 and was particularly influential within Greek Orthodox intellectual circles in the 1960s and 1970s. The movement took positions on social and political issues, as well as on regional politics, notably the Palestinian cause.⁵⁵ Its leading intellectual mentor and co-

founder, Bishop Georges Khodr, contributed to the political and intellectual debate on the Palestinian problem. His views have come to influence a whole generation of politically-mobilised Orthodox youth.⁵⁶

The issues these movements and groups raised reflected serious attempts at change. While initially dealing with religious and social matters, they also took a stand on the major political and social issues that marked political debate in the 1970s. The cause that attracted wide popular support and concerned human rights and justice was the Palestinian cause. For many Christian political activists, support for the Palestinians as a people deprived of a homeland was very much in line with Christian beliefs and principles of justice, detached from any self-serving political agenda.⁵⁷ For them, the PLO's agenda of power politics in Lebanon was of secondary importance.

Contrary to demands and/or grievances voiced by the Christian and Muslim political establishments which targeted the state and had a well-defined political and communal agenda, protest within these Christian movements was directed against both church and state. These movements helped radicalise a new generation of Christian intelligentsia. Many of them joined Leftist parties while others were politically active with Palestinian organisations, particularly Fateh.

The situation changed in the course of the war. The internal rift grew increasingly along sectarian lines, particularly in 1976, as the PLO became openly engaged in combat against Christian targets. For those Christians who saw in the Palestinian struggle a cause worthy of support, they could neither explain nor accept that PLO fighters were engaged in warfare in Lebanon's cities and remote mountain areas – a war which had nothing to do with the objective of liberating Palestine from Israeli occupation.⁵⁸

Communal Reaction to the PLO: The Case of the Maronites Prior to the outbreak of war, the Palestinian factor served as a vehicle for change, particularly for the Sunni political establishment and for the Jumblatt-led Left. It provoked the opposite

reaction on the part of the Maronite political establishment. While Jumblatt and the Left sought to introduce radical change in the system, the Sunni political establishment sought to tilt the balance within the executive in its favour.⁵⁹

The Maronites, to be sure, were among the early propagators of Arab nationalism and had been at the forefront of Arab political and cultural life since the late 19th century. But just as the Maronites were among the first to identify with Arab causes and articulate political ideologies, they were the first to disengage from these causes once they felt threatened. Unlike other minorities in the Arab world, the Maronites have always had the option of retreat, not only politically but also territorially. For centuries, prior to the emergence of Arab nationalism and other contemporary political movements, the Maronites had developed a strong sense of communal identity centred around the church.

It is in the historical evolution of communal consciousness and the way in which it was articulated politically that it is possible to explain the different reactions of the Lebanese communities to PLO military presence, notably that of the Maronite community.⁶⁰ Of all the variants of pan-Arabism that swept Lebanon, particularly Nasserism in the late 1950s, the PLO constituted an overwhelming threat to the average apolitical Maronite.

To the extent that the PLO was perceived as a menace to communal interests and security, it provoked a populist reaction commensurate with that perception of threat.⁶¹ The most intense was expressed by the Kataeb Party. Just as in 1958 Camille Chamoun was the Nasser of the Maronites, Pierre Gemayel in 1975 became their Arafat. The decision by the Jumblatt-led Left to isolate the Kataeb Party following the 'Ayn al-Rummaneh confrontation (covered later) elevated the party to unprecedented popularity and made it the de facto defender of Christian interests. In a way, to be a Kataeb in 1975–76 was to oppose PLO aggression. As the Kuwaiti deputy foreign minister Jabir al-'Ali replied to Abu Iyad's explanation of the Palestinian role in the war: 'If I were a Lebanese, I'd be a Falangist.'⁶²

Maronite reaction was a response to PLO insensitivity to Maronite communal sensitivities shaped by centuries of rebellion in Lebanon's mountains and valleys. To the extent that the Maronites viewed Lebanon as their last refuge after centuries of persecution and insecurity, they were not willing to 'share' that refuge with a people also looking for a refuge in the age of the nation-state. No two 'refugee' people can share a refuge. It is either 'ours' or 'theirs'.

While populist self-defence has been a phenomenon shared by all Lebanese communities, though the timing and intensity of communal mobilisation varied, what differentiated the Maronite community from others was its close political identification with the state. Of all communities, the overlap between Maronite *raison de communauté* and *raison d'état* was comparatively the most visible and the most spontaneous.

To the extent that Maronite leaders sought to curtail the PLO and, by extension, to avoid giving Israel a pretext to wage war in Lebanon, their action was in line with that of leaders of other Arab states. After 1967, the three confrontation states (Syria, Jordan and Egypt) were concerned about the PLO's policy of *tawrit* which attracted Israeli attacks in retaliation to guerrilla raids.⁶³ Their concern was justified on the grounds that Israel should not be given 'an excuse to attack the Arab countries', as Abu Iyad quoted a note sent by Egyptian General 'Ali 'Amir (the commander-in-chief of the Unified Arab Forces) to Arab governments asking them to stop guerrilla operations.⁶⁴ While Arab governments prevented guerrilla operations across their borders, particularly after the 1973 war, they encouraged and supported operations from Lebanese territory.

Maronite reaction to the PLO armed presence could be likened to that of Palestinian leaders trying to shield the PLO from intervention by external parties. Like Maronite leaders who sought to prevent Palestinian and Arab meddling in domestic politics, the PLO, especially Fateh, opposed Arab meddling in Palestinian affairs. Ironically, Maronite and Palestinian leaders shared a similar objective. In the case of the Maronites, it was to preserve Lebanon's sovereignty. In the case of the PLO, the objective was to preserve sovereignty by securing freedom of action.

Preserving sovereignty and room for autonomous decision-making has been the challenge that the Lebanese state has had to face with its regional

environment. While at times this interaction has been problem-free, at other times it has been detrimental to Lebanon. The nature of this interaction and its consequences will be explored in the next part by situating the Lebanese state in the Arab state system.

Notes

- 1 For a survey of political parties in Lebanon both before and during the war, see Farid el Khazen, 'Tajribat al-Ahzab al-Siyasiyya fi Lubnan', in Antoine Messarra (ed.), *Al-Ahzab wa al-Qiwa al-Siyasiyya fi Lubnan* (Beirut: The Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 1996): 359–91. For an earlier comprehensive work on political parties in pre-war Lebanon, see Michael W. Suleiman, *Political Parties in Lebanon. The Challenge of a Fragmented Political Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).
- 2 See Waddah Sharara, *Hurub al-Istitba'. Lubnan al-Harb al-Ahliyya al-Da'ima* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1979): 18–19.
- 3 Interview with Mohsin Ibrahim, 6 March 1997.
- 4 See, for example, Ishtirakiyyun Lubnaniyyun, *Al-'Amal al-Ishtiraki wa Tanaqudat alWad'al-Lubnani* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1969). See also Muhammad Kishli, *Hawla al-Nizam al-Ra'smali wa al-Yasar fi Lubnan* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1967).
- 5 See Tareq Y. Ismael, *The Arab Left* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1976): 108–23.
- 6 For a survey of these changes, see Walid Nuwayhid, 'Naqd al-Hizb al-Qawmi al Ijtima'i', *Dirasat 'Arabiyya* No. 7 (May 1973): 32–54.
- 7 See 'Abdallah Sa'adeh, *Awraq Qawmiyya. Muzakarat al-Doctor 'Abdallah Sa'adeh* (Beirut: n.p., 1987): 220. See also Elizabeth Picard, 'L'Evolution Récente du Parti Populaire Syrien', *Maghreb Machrek*, 78 (October–December 1977), pp. 74–6. For a critical account of the Party by a former party member, see Labib Zuwiyya Yamak, *The Syrian Social Nationalist Party. An Ideological Analysis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).
- 8 Sa'adeh, *Awraq Qawmiyya...*, p. 222.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid., p.223.
- 12 See René Chamussy, 'Une Difficile Année Sociale', *Travaux et Jours*, No. 53 (October–December 1974): 53–77.
- 13 See Fawaz Traboulsi, *Surat al-Fata al-Ahmar. Ayyam ft al-Silm wa al-Harb* (Beirut: Riad El-Rayess Books, 1997): 108.
- 14 Ibid., p. 110.
- 15 See Jacques Couland, *Le Mouvement Syndical au Liban, 1919–1946* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1970). See also Elias al-Boueri, *Tarikh al-Haraka al-'Ummaliyya wa al-Naqabiyya fi Lubnan, 1908–1946* vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1979); and vol. II (same title and publisher, 1980).
- 16 See Sharara, *Hurub al-Istitba'...*, pp. 145–62.
- 17 See Theodor Hanf, 'Le Comportement Politique des Etudiants Libanais', *Travaux et Jours*, 46 (January, 1973): 5–52.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid., pp. 17–22; The four universities were the Lebanese University, Saint Joseph University, The American University of Beirut and the Beirut Arab University.
- 20 Ibid., p. 9.
- 21 See interview with two founders of 'Harakat al-Wa'i' Antoine Doueihy in *Nahar alShababy* 13 February 1996, pp. 4–5 and 'Issam Khalifeh, *Nahar al-Shababy* 5 December 1995, pp. 4–5.

- 22 See John Donohue, 'Conflit à l'Université Américaine de Beyrouth', *Travaux et Jours*, (April–June 1971): 101–13; Gordon, *Lebanon...*, pp. 187–208. See also Halim Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977): 157–84.
- 23 This was confirmed by several observers and student activists during that period. Interview with Waddah Sharara, 4 March 1996. Toufic Hindi, 7 October 1996. Melhem Chaoul, 10 November 1996. Suleiman Takiuddin, 16 April 1997.
- 24 See interview with Ahmad Baydoun, *Mulhaq al-Nahar*, 22 February 1997, p. 5.
- 25 See interview with Samir Frangiyeh, *Nahar al-Shabab*, 7 November 1996, pp. 4–5.
- 26 On the political-ideological debate in the early 1970s, see Nassif Nassar, *Nahwa Mujtama' Jadid. Muqadimat Asasiyya fi Naqd al-Mujtama' al-Ta'ifi*. (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 1970).
- 27 See Muhammad Kishli, *Naqd al-Hayat al-Siyasiyya al-Lubnaniyya* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Khaldun, 1991): 49–57. See also series of twelve interviews with leading political activists in the 1970s, notably, Samir Frangiyeh (7 November), Karim Pakradouni (21 November) and Paul Chaoul (April 16), *Nahar al-Shabab* 7 November 1995 to 16 April 1996. See also *Lubnan al-Akhar. Mu'tamar Hawl al-'Almana wa al-Hawiyya al-'Arabiyya* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Dirasat wa al-Abhath al-Lubnaniyya, 1976).
- 28 Interviews with leading Leftist activists. Mohsin Ibrahim, 6 March 1997; 'Issam Na'man, July 1996; Muhammad Kishli, 10 March 1994; Fawaz Traboulsi, 1996. See also Mahdi 'Amil, *Al-Nazariyya fi al-Mumayasa al-Siyasiyya: Bahth fi Asbab al-Harb al-Ahliyya fi Lubnan* (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1979): 85–174.
- 29 Frangiyeh, *Nahar al-Shabab*, 7 November, 1996, p. 5.
- 30 Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd. A Study of The Popular Mind* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1952).
- 31 See the discussion paper presented by Bishop Antoine Hamid Mourani to a conference organised by the Church For Our World in 1977, entitled 'Min Khuluqiyyat al-Khatar ila Khulukiyat al-Bina' in *Fi Hawiyyat Lubnan al-Tarikhiyya* (Beirut, Dar al-Nahar, 1994): 73–87.
- 32 Fares, *Al-Niza 'at al-Ta'ifiyyah...*, pp 172.
- 33 Interview with Bishop Grégoire Haddad, 18 September 1997.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Mourani, *Fi Hawiyyat...*, pp. 149–57.
- 36 Interview with former JEC official Ibrahim Chibli, 25 February 1997.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Names include Greek Catholic Bishop Grégoire Haddad, Priests Elie Katra, Hector Doueihy, Georges Kouwaiter, Salim Gazal, Samir Mazloum, Augustin Dupré La tour, Paul Feghali, Elie Baho, in addition to other participants, including nuns, seminarians, intellectuals and student activists. See *Notre Eglise en Question. Un Dossier de l'Orient Culturel* (Beirut: Editions de l'Orient, 1969): 179.
- 39 The manifesto was published in *Notre Eglise en Question...*, pp. 177–9.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid., p. 178.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid., p. 179.
- 44 Ibid., pp. 183–215. See also pp. 217–25.
- 45 Ibid., p. 208.

- 46 Ibid., p. 209.
- 47 Ibid., p. 210.
- 48 Interview with a former leading member of JEC.
- 49 See Hector Doueihi, 'Kanissat al-Hajar wa Kanissat al-Bashat', *Mawaqif*, No.15, (May–June 1969); 97–118. See also Fares, *Al-Niza'af al-Ta'ifiyya...*, pp. 173–4. Doueihi became Maronite Bishop in the United States in 1996.
- 50 Interview with Ibrahim Chibli, 25 February 1997.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 The Committee included Gaby Habib, Father Corban, Tareq Mitri, Nabil Abboud, Marie Rose Boulos and others. Boulos later developed close ties with Fateh.
- 53 See pamphlet put out by the group entitled 'Al-Masihyyun wa al-Tahadiyyat alMatruha' (n.d.).
- 54 Father Moubarak attempted a mediation to help end the fighting in the Tal-Za'tar Palestinian camp in 1976. See Abu Iyad (with Eric Rouleau), *My Home, My Land: A Narrative of the Palestinian Struggle* (New York: Times Books, 1981): 191–2.
- 55 Interview with Georges Nassif, 4 December 1995.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Interview with Father Michel Hayek, 5 January 1995.
- 58 Ibid. Several Christian intellectuals who joined the PLO confirmed that reading. Some left the PLO in 1976, others at a later date. Interview with Melhem Chaoul, 10 November 1996.
- 59 See, for example, the verbatim account of meetings between Muslim leaders, Arafat and other Arab leaders, held in Dar al-Fatwa in 'Aramoun, Al-Shaykh Hassan Khalid, *AlMuslimun ft Lubnan wa al-Harb al-Ahliyya*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kindi, 1978): 176–97, 221–7, 262–85. See also Marwan Hamadé, 'L'Islam Libanais, du Nasserisme à la Participation', *Travaux et Jours* No. 53 (October–December 1974): 5–12.
- 60 See Mourani, *Fi Hawiyyat...*, pp. 45–8.
- 61 See Najla Atiya, *Lubnan, al-Mushkila wa al-Ma'sat* (Beirut: n.p., 1977): 24–38 and 103–22.
- 62 Abu Iyad, *My Home...*, p. 173.
- 63 See Mohamed Heikal, *Secret Channels. The Inside Story of Arab-Israeli Peace Negotiations* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996): 299–300.
- 64 Abu Iyad, *My Home...*, pp. 183–218.

Part III

The Lebanese State and the Arab State System

7

State-Society Relations

Situating the Lebanese State

Three interdependent issues are of particular relevance to the study of the nature of statist politics in Lebanon. First, the historical evolution of the modern state and the process of state formation, especially in the post-independence period. Second, state-society relations in an open political system and in a plural society. Third, state-society relations and state capacities in crises involving regional state and non-state actors having different state-society relations and state capacities from those of the Lebanese state.

State-Society Relations: A Brief Theoretical Note

The academic debate dealing with ‘state-centred’ and ‘society-centred’ theoretical approaches and the relative merit of each is rich and varied. The modern state, Philippe Schmitter argues, seems to be ‘an amorphous complex of agencies with ill-defined boundaries, performing a great variety of not very

distinctive functions'.¹ But just as 'the state has its own *sui generis* dynamic and strategic capacities so that it is resistant to direct external control, the various spheres of society also have their own *sui generis* logics and capacities which prevent their direct control by the state'.² 'The lines between state and society,' noted Stephen Krasner, 'have become blurred.'³

The ongoing debate about the 'state', the 'political system' and the 'born-again' state, brought back on centre stage, did not make the boundary issue any clearer. Reviewing critically the different approaches to the study of state-society relations, Timothy Mitchell has concluded that 'the edges of the state are uncertain; societal elements seem to penetrate it on all sides, and the resulting boundary between state and society is difficult to determine.'⁴ Thus, Mitchell advocates an alternative approach to the state which 'has to begin with this uncertain boundary'.⁵

There are numerous definitions of the state each emphasising its nature, its functions and the sources of its power. The state can be defined by its territorial boundaries, its legal form, its coercive capacities, its institutional structure and internal operations. It can also be defined by its declared aims, its functions for the broader society and its sovereign place in the international system.⁶

The state's powers are activated through various mechanisms which involve political leaders and state officials located in various power centres within the state system. But the powers and resources of the state are conditional and its effectiveness is dependent on a complex network of both internal and external social forces.⁷

States, particularly in developing countries, have varying capabilities and differing patterns of state-society relations, as explained by Joel S. Migdal in a comparative work on state-society relations in the Third World. While in the West, 'the rightness of a state having high capabilities to extract,

penetrate, regulate, and appropriate' is taken for granted,⁸ in the Third World this is not necessarily the case. The role of the state, its resources of power and capabilities, varies in different societies. It may be argued that the neglect of the concept of the state in earlier social science literature is perhaps due to the fact that 'the state has been too much with us and, as a result, has been wholly unremarkable'.⁹

Whether in Europe or in the new states of the Third World, state predominance is visible at the political, social and economic level. Whether 'soft', 'strong' or 'weak', the state has come to shape society and has been shaped by it.¹⁰ As J. P. Nettl has explained there are variable levels of 'stateness'.¹¹ The degree of stateness, N ettl writes, 'is a useful variable for comparing Western societies and that the absence or presence of a well-developed concept of state relates to and identifies important empirical differences in these societies.'¹²

The variable qualities of 'stateness' depend on three traditions: historical, intellectual and cultural.¹³ While some countries have established historical, intellectual and cultural traditions of state, others have varying degrees of weaker traditions. The French state provides the basic European model, while 'stateness' varies among other Western countries, the United States and Britain are comparatively speaking the most 'stateless'. Commitment to stateness in other countries, including multicommunal societies, was in part the result of 'deliberate borrowing' from the experience of other countries.¹⁴ It is also doubtful whether a federal regime can incorporate any adequate notion of state.¹⁵

As for 'stateness' in Third World countries, Nettl argues that 'the possibility of developing states of the European type in today's new nations seems remote'.¹⁶ This is because 'the European experience of 'stateness' was essentially the product of a particularisation or narrowing of sovereignty into ethnically homogeneous or at least ethnically defined areas ... The process can be described as an implosion'.¹⁷ By contrast, the process in the developing countries was one of explosion, for 'the real incorporation into new units of the arbitrary areas carved up by colonial powers followed and did not precede the attainment of independence'.¹⁸ Thus the concentration of the new 'inherited' territory – the '*nation trouvée*'.¹⁹

Notwithstanding the varying attributes of stateness and the state's capacities, the very survival of the state may in some instances also be at stake. Threats to the survival of the state are not only generated from within society but are also linked to the broader regional and international environment. Therefore, the role and capacities of the state become dependent on factors that fall beyond the state's domestic control.

Neither the historical formation of state institutions nor the development of its capacities has grown in isolation. Changes in the power structure within one state have affected power structures in other states. In some instances, changes within one state generated by its mobilising and organisational resources and generally for the purpose of engaging in war have put the survival of other states into question.²⁰

In the past, states engaged in open warfare, without concealing the objectives of domination and control. In the post-World War II era, however, wars and expansionism have taken on different forms and have required various political and ideological justifications. The rise of the modern nation-state and the bi-polar international system since World War II have dictated particular norms of conduct on the part of the superpowers, other major powers and Third World states. Despite appearances of equality, the structural imbalance in the power resources and capacities of states that make up the contemporary international system has continued to widen. 'The inequality of nations', Robert Tucker has argued, is as much a given in power politics in the post-World War II international system as it was in past international systems.²¹

Clearly, the state's ability to survive in an environment of conflict rests on a number of factors, such as its organisational capabilities, its control over the legitimate means of coercion, potential material and human resources, territorial and population size and the nature of the externally-generated threats it faces. Even more important is the state's capacity to mobilise the society's population and this is particularly the case when actors outside its borders, which are beyond its immediate control, threaten the state. As Krasner notes, a state's strength in external relations rests on its strength in relation to its society.²² Furthermore, in a comparison of the strength of nations Kugler and Domler note that 'the foundation of power in the global system ... is the relationship between state and society. Governments

acquire the tools of political influence through the mobilisation of human and material resources for state action.’²³

Mobilising resources in support of the state and doing so effectively and with the appropriate timing is a challenge facing all states, be they closed or open, and all societies, be they homogeneous or heterogeneous. The problem is how to make the population comply with the rules of the state rather than the rules of the clan, community and other groups in society. Moreover, how can this be done in times of crisis, when support for the state is most needed? According to Migdal, ‘the major struggles in many societies, especially those with fairly new states, are over who has the right and ability to make the countless rules that guide people’s social behaviour’.²⁴ In this way, ‘the strength of the state organisation in an environment of conflict has depended, in large part, on the social control it has exercised. The more currency – that is, compliance, participation and legitimation – available to state leaders, the higher the level of social control to achieve state goals.’²⁵

Lebanon Versus Other Weak States

In pre-war Lebanon, the state's social control,²⁶ as reflected in its capacity to penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources and appropriate or use resources in determined ways, was limited. If the social control of authoritarian states like Egypt and Mexico is limited, as Migdal has demonstrated, it is hardly surprising that social control in an open state system and plural society like Lebanon's is even more so. In short, 'where social structure has not been worked by deeply entrenched strongmen or where such strongmen have been weakened, state leaders have had greater opportunities to apply a single set of rules, the state's rules, and build channels for widespread, sustained political support.'²⁷

Like other Third World countries, Lebanon's experience of stateness, as Nettl explains, consisted in part of borrowing from Western models. The modern Lebanese state was established in 1920 and acquired a constitution in 1926. Modern state institutions were formed during the formative years of the mandate. The multi-communal nature of Lebanese society, however, had taken shape in Mount Lebanon prior to the formation of the state in 1920. The territorial and legal foundations of the unitary state were there, but the structure of political power, which reflected the communal nature of Lebanese society, was not unitary. A centralised state apparatus functioned as the 'puli' for intra-societal unity, while the decentralised nature of political power had the opposite 'push' function. In terms of state-society relations, the outcome of this contradictory mechanism translated into a low degree of 'stateness' in Lebanon and a permanent dependence of the state on the multi-communal structure of power within society.

Moreover, the state's impact on society implies, by definition, the impact of society on the state: 'a society fragmented in social control affects the character of the state, which, in turn, reinforces the fragmentation of society.'²⁸ Perhaps no country has embodied this dual pattern of state-society relationship more visibly than Lebanon. Prior to the outbreak of war, the problem was not only over the state's access to resources and its right and ability to use them, but also over its survival – that is, its survival as a weak state. The fact that a state is weak does not, however, mean that it

should collapse; nor does it mean that the country should be the scene of war.

To be sure, Lebanon is not the only country in the contemporary international system with a weak state,²⁹ nor is it the only country with a fragmented society. Nor were the challenges faced by the state, beginning in the late 1960s, the first to strain state-society relations. In this light, was the collapse in the mid-1970s due to the state's reaching its lowest level of social control, or was it due to an unprecedented degree of society's strength, which overpowered the state?

One way to address these issues is to assess the performance of Lebanon's weak state in comparative terms, that is, by situating it in the broader context of states in Third World countries. How is one to explain the persistence of other weak states in the international system? Why, for example, have Africa's weak states persisted? Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg addressed this question by highlighting the difference between the empirical and the juridical in statehood.³⁰ They argued that 'juridical statehood is more important than empirical statehood in accounting for the persistence of states in Black Africa'.³¹

Although 'Black Africa's forty-odd states are the weakest in the world ..., ' write Jackson and Rosberg, none has been 'destroyed or even significantly changed. No country has disintegrated into smaller jurisdictions or been absorbed into a larger one against the wishes of its legitimate government and as a result of violence or the threat of violence. No territories or people – or even a segment of them – have been taken over by another country. No African state has been divided as a result of internal warfare.'³² Adopting the Weberian concept of the state – that it must have a monopoly of force in territories under its jurisdiction – Jackson and Rosberg conclude that 'some African states were not states, and that statehood in others has periodically been in doubt.'³³

Drawing on the distinction between the empirical and the juridical dimensions of states, the authors argue that entities that are empirically micro-states are juridically full-fledged states. The preservation of juridical statehood in Africa can be explained by considering the following factors: the ideology of pan-Africanism; the vulnerability of all states in the region and the insecurity of statesmen; the support of the larger international

society; and the reluctance, to date, of non-African powers to intervene in the affairs of African states without having been invited to do so by their governments.³⁴

Using these factors, several parallels can be drawn between states in the African state system and Lebanon in its regional order, the Arab state system. While the above factors helped foster stateness in Africa, they had the opposite effect in Lebanon. Whereas the ideology of pan-Africanism is 'a bulwark within Africa against the isolation of existing, inherited state jurisdictions',³⁵ pan-Arabism in Lebanon has been the vehicle through which such actions have taken place and been given ideological and political cover. Whereas 'roughly equal powerlessness' induces African governments to support the rules and practices of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which are intended to uphold existing state jurisdictions,³⁶ in Lebanon's immediate regional order, it is the hegemonic practices of member states that have undermined the authority and influence of the League of Arab States, the closest equivalent to the OAU.

Whereas membership of African states in international organisations, notably the United Nations, has legitimised their existence and strengthened their rights and duties,³⁷ states in the Arab state system and in the broader Middle Eastern regional order have fared differently. In Africa, the disparity between states in terms of political power, military capacity, economic resources are not as wide as is in the Middle East. There, not only do the state's resources and its capacity to use them differ markedly but so too does the state's access to the superpowers. Furthermore, the Middle East has been the scene of a regional conflict, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the longest regional conflict since World War II and one in which the superpowers have been directly involved. No conflict of this kind has taken place in Africa or any other region.

These developments have had an uneven impact on inter-Arab relations as well as on Arab relations with the superpowers. Whereas international society has generally prevented forceful interventions in the affairs of African states, in Lebanon's regional order various types of intervention by external powers have taken place. Although in some instances solicited by local states, these interventions in the Cold War era were of a different nature and magnitude in the Middle East than were interventions by the

Soviet Union or by France in Africa. They also had objectives that differed from those sought by the major powers in the Middle East.

While external rather than internal factors are more likely to provide an adequate explanation for the formation and persistence of African states, this is not necessarily true for other regions of the Third World, including the Arab state system and the wider Middle Eastern state system. In light of the above we see that those factors, whether regional or international, which worked in favour of maintaining weak and divided states in Africa had the opposite effect in the Middle East, to the detriment of weak state actors, notably Lebanon.

The role and effectiveness of the state are also a function of its place in the world of states.³⁸ International society, the balance of power politics and the bipolar international system have helped to preserve the legal and the territorial existence of the relatively vulnerable new states. The state in Lebanon was a beneficiary of the legal and, to a lesser extent, the political cover provided by the international system. It was difficult to absorb Lebanon and eliminate its existence altogether, but it was possible to occupy parts of the country. Thus apart from the legal and territorial dimensions of stateness, other attributes of the state were severely affected.

Elements of State Control and Lebanon's Situation

The starting point to explain the collapse of the state in the first half of the 1970s is the Weberian concept of state control. As the state gains control over a territorial base, it acquires greater bureaucratic organisational capacities and monopoly over the means of coercion. Max Weber referred to 'a compulsory political organisation with continuous operations ... as a 'state' in so far as its administration staff successfully upholds the claim to

the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order'.³⁹

The authority of the state should, then, supersede the rest of society's institutions. This does not mean, however, that the state is incompatible with diversity. Indeed, as Richard Rose asserted in his study of Britain, a modern state can absorb social diversity to the extent of being 'multinational'.⁴⁰ Moreover, segmental cleavages do not always erode the political authority of the state that depends on the degree of compliance it secures from its citizens.

The state's political authority does not reflect the degree of popular legitimacy it enjoys. This depends on whether the support from its subjects is voluntary or involuntary: that is, the extent to which it is enforced coercively. Involuntary support of the state, however, violates one of Stanley Hoffmann's definitions of states' rights: namely, the right derived from domestic society (the other being international society).

According to Hoffmann, the existence of a state is derived from 'the needs of consent of its people'.⁴¹ Thus, individual rights define state rights: 'the right of a state of their own – the horizontal contract – which is the source of political obligation – and the right to political and civil liberty – the vertical tie which, within the state, binds the government to the people.'⁴² Involuntary support of the state would then erode the state's legitimacy, since reciprocity between the state and the people is not maintained.

Hoffmann's classification is applicable to homogeneous rather than to heterogeneous societies like Lebanon. But the state in Lebanon did uphold the right to political and civil liberty, partly because its legitimacy is based on the respect of communal autonomy. In other words, the state's legitimacy is derived from its non-assimilationist and non-interventionist policy in the autonomous domain of communal groups. It is legitimate in communal eyes because it delegates authority to various sectarian groups. Thus, the state acquires legitimacy in part because it relinquishes its monopoly over authority. This has resulted in an unusual pattern of system-balancing: that of state legitimacy being a function of the strength of communal autonomy.

The state plays a similar role in other democratic plural societies such as Belgium, Switzerland and Canada. But in these countries the communal structure of society is institutionalised in the federal political system. In practice, this means that the cultural, regional and linguistic differences are unambiguously recognised by the state. In political terms, this translates into political decentralisation. In Lebanon, by contrast, the process is reversed. Lebanon opted for a unitary state with a centralised administration, but preserved the communal political structure embodied in the confessional system.

Lebanon's political elites were most influenced by the French experience with its strong – if not the strongest – state-centred tradition in Europe. In 1920, a centralised state structure was put in place, but the political process mirrored the pre-1920 confessional structure of society. It was in this dichotomous setting that Lebanese politics oscillated between unity in the name of the state and disunity in the name of society. Hence the built-in tension in non-crisis situations, and political paralysis in times of crisis.

In view of these structural constraints on the creation of a strong and autonomous state in Lebanon, two alternatives are possible. One consists of preserving political and civil rights to ensure genuine communal coexistence. This would be the number one priority in Lebanon's plural society, open to its regional environment. But this alternative involves the risk of weakening central authority and curtailing state prerogatives, particularly in crisis situations. The other calls for a strong and unimpeded state authority closely identified with the effective monopoly over the instruments of coercion. But in non-democratic regimes, the state's right to possess the monopoly of legitimate violence is usually aimed at perpetuating repressive rule.

Why is there not another alternative whereby the state derives legitimacy from its citizens and exercises political authority through democratic institutions? The answer to this question illustrates Lebanon's dilemma and highlights the various paths to power taken by the Lebanese state in contrast to other Arab states with which Lebanon had to interact, particularly in relation to pan-Arab issues and causes. These issues are discussed in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 Phillipe Schmitter, 'Neo Corporatism and the State', in Wyn Grant (ed.), *The Political Economy of Corporatism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985): 33.
- 2 Bob Jessop, 'Putting States in Their Place: State Systems and State Theory', in Adrian Leftwich, ed, in *New Developments in Political Science: An International Review of Achievements and Prospects* (London, 1990): 54.
- 3 Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978): xi.
- 4 Timothy Mitchell, 'The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics', *American Political Science Review* 85 (March 1991): 88.
- 5 Ibid. Mitchell suggests five propositions for a new approach to the state and the question of its boundary. Ibid., p. 95.
- 6 Jessop, 'Putting States...', p. 44. See also the thorough survey on the state debate in relation to the Middle East in Nazih N. Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State, Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995): 1–37.
- 7 Ibid., pp. 57–8.
- 8 Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States. State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988): 15.
- 9 Ibid., p. 16. See also Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer and Theda Skocpol (eds), *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 347–66.
- 10 See, for example, Charles Tilly, *As Sociology Meets History* (New York: Academic Press, 1981); Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State: A Sociological Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978); Kenneth H. F. Dyson, *The State Tradition in Western Europe: A Study of an Idea and Institution* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1980).
- 11 J. P. Nettl, 'The State as a Conceptual Variable', *World Politics* 20 (October 1967–July 1968): 559–92.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 591–2.
- 13 Ibid., pp. 566–79. Nettl writes that 'the identification of state with nation ... depends not only on empirical problems relating to the activity and structure of a particular state but on the existence of a cultural disposition to allot recognition to the conceptual existence of a state at all. This disposition can be isolated in various ways: historical, intellectual, and cultural'. Ibid., p. 566.
- 14 Ibid., p. 567.
- 15 Ibid., p. 568.
- 16 Ibid., p. 589. An application of Nettl's definitions of state and stateness on the Middle East is Gabriel Ben-Dor, *State and Conflict in the Middle East: Emergence of the Post-colonial State* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983).
- 17 Ibid., p. 590.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid., pp. 590–1.
- 20 See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge University Press, 1979); Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: NLB, 1974).

- 21 Robert W. Tucker, *The Inequality of Nations* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).
- 22 Stephen D. Krasner, 'Domestic Constraints on International Economic Leverage', in Klaus Knorr and Frank N. Trager (eds), *Economic Issues and National Security* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977).
- 23 Jack Kugler and William Domke, 'Comparing the Strength of Nations', *Comparative Political Studies* 19 (April 1986): 40.
- 24 Migdal, *Strong Societies...*, p. 31.
- 25 Ibid., p. 33. On the three indicators of social control by the state, see Migdal, Ibid., pp. 32–3 and pp. 259–77.
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- 27 Migdal, *Strong Societies...*, pp. 256–7.
- 28 Ibid., p. 257.
- 29 See Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London: Frank Cass, 1981). Handel argues that 'no state is entirely strong or wholly weak'... hence the relative power of states', pp. 50–2.
- 30 Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, 'Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood', *World Politics* 35 (October 1982): 1–24.
- 31 Ibid., p. 21.
- 32 Ibid., p. 1.
- 33 Ibid., p. 12.
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- 35 Ibid., p. 18.
- 36 Ibid., p. 19.
- 37 Ibid., p. 20.
- 38 Migdal, *Strong Societies...*, p. 21.
- 39 Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (eds) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978): 54.
- 40 Richard Rose, *The Territorial Dimension in Government: Understanding the United Kingdom* (Chatham, N. J.: Chatham House Publishers, 1982): 10–65.
- 41 Stanley Hoffmann, *Duties Beyond Borders. On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981): 58.
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8

The Lebanese State and the Arab State System

Varying Paths to Power

To assess the performance of the state in Lebanon and state-society relations in the broader context of regional statist politics, a distinction should be made between crisis and non-crisis situations. Three levels of analysis can be discerned. First, when the state faces an internal crisis in which disputes involve Lebanese politicians, political parties and communities and no external actors. This was the case in the 1952 crisis. Second, external crises involving regional or international issues and actors. Examples include Arab-Israeli wars and Cold War politics. Third, when there is a combination of overlapping internal and external crises as was the case in 1958 and subsequently in the successive crises which began in the late 1960s and culminated in the 1975–76 war.

The Historical Requisites for a ‘Normal’ State in Lebanon A weak state with a precarious political system need not lead to the kind of collapse that took place in Lebanon. The question is when does

weakness turn into a permanent handicap and, as a result, the state becomes overpowered?

Lebanon had all the historical requisites for a 'normal' state, that is, for a strong state or one no weaker than the new states that emerged in the Arab world in the aftermath of the First World War. Prior to the formation of the modern Lebanese state, Mount Lebanon's *Mutasarrifiyya* – which served as the core territorial area for the state of Greater Lebanon in 1920 – had experienced more than fifty years of semi-autonomous rule under Ottoman authority. The 1861 *Réglement Organique* that established the *Mutasarrifiyya*, laid the communal foundations of the post-1920 Lebanese state.¹ Unable to agree on an amenable indigenous ruler for Mount Lebanon, the powers opted for an Ottoman *mutasarrif* (governor). He would be a Christian, of the Catholic faith, appointed by the Porte with the approval of European powers. He would also be assisted by an administrative council in which Mount Lebanon's sectarian groups would be represented.

By and large, the *Mutasarrifiyya* arrangement brought prosperity and communal stability to the Mountain.² But that was not because Ottoman governors enjoyed popular support or because they were able to consolidate rule by eliminating local rivals or by repressing rebellious groups. Rather, their rule was supported and legitimised by the European powers and by the Ottomans, for they all shared a common interest in keeping Mount Lebanon out of the disputes of the major powers. In addition, the Mountain was exhausted after more than two decades of turmoil culminating in the 1860 civil war. Mount Lebanon became a more governable society, especially now that it was clear that the balance of power had shifted in favour of the Maronite community – the Mountain's largest sectarian group.

These internal and external factors gave the 'state' – then embodied in the office of the governor and the administrative council – room to exercise effective rule. Elements of central authority were increasingly visible: a police force (*gendarmerie*) was established, taxation was enforced and the building blocks of a central bureaucracy were in place. Yet, the ultimate source of authority fell beyond Mount Lebanon's borders; it remained a function of the working relationship among the foreign guarantors of the

Mutasarrifiyya. The governors who enjoyed significant power had the support of the notables and the Maronite Church and the backing of the major powers. French consuls in Beirut and Istanbul were the most influential and the most involved in Mount Lebanon's politics.³

In sum, governors came to symbolise ultimate political authority in the Mountain. But the institution of *Mutasarrifiyya* prevailed so long as it was allowed to determine its own priorities to rule. Not unlike the Ottoman state itself, greatly weakened in the second half of the 19th century, the 'state' in Mount Lebanon remained at the mercy of the prevailing balance of power between European powers and the Porte. This was also the perception of Mount Lebanon's communities, particularly the Maronites, who viewed the *Mutasarrifiyya* as a temporary, foreign-imposed political formula dictated by the necessity of the situation.⁴

In an important recent work on the *Mutasarrifiyya*, Engin Akarli has shown 'that the modern political institutions and traditions of Lebanese polity are more deeply rooted in history than is often presumed to be the case, and they involve a democratic-participatory orientation, as opposed to an authoritarian-bureaucratic one.'⁵ According to Akarli, ... on the verge of the First World War ... the basic institutions of a modern governmental apparatus were in place. These were centralized executive, fiscal, and judicial branches, and a centralized security force, as well as municipal administrations serving the towns. The government operated under constitutional regulations. Court procedure was formalized and the law was standardized to a considerable extent ... In short, a basic sense of the rule of law had struck roots. The entire system was financed by locally raised revenue and manned by experienced native personnel.⁶

These attributes of government or of a quasi 'state' preceding the formation of the modern state distinguished Lebanon's historical political experience from that of neighbouring countries.

In a typology covering the origins of the Arab state system, Iliya Harik places Lebanon in the traditional secular system, where 'authority is vested in a dynasty free from religious attributes'.⁷ He points out that of the five states that fell under the colonial mandate system (Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Transjordan, Palestine), only Lebanon 'constituted an autonomous polity. The rest were ruled directly by the Ottoman government from Istanbul in

much the same fashion as the military oligarchies in other places. No nuclei of autonomous states were in existence in the region before that time.’⁸

With the exception of Egypt, all other states in the region were shaped in one way or the other by the British and the French.⁹ David Fromkin’s detailed work on the making of the modern states in the Middle East after World War One shows how artificial and accidental state making was in the hands of British and French officials both before and after the signing of the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916. Some states were created from scratch (e.g. Jordan), some were assembled (e.g. Iraq), some were the outcome of guided conquests (e.g. Saudi Arabia), and some did not exist in the 1920s (e.g. Israel).¹⁰ Contrary to these post-war colonial schemes envisaged by Paris and London, Mount Lebanon’s special historical and territorial status which served as a nucleus for the post-1920 state in Lebanon, was taken as a given by the two Western powers.

To be sure, the Lebanese state was less artificial than neighbouring states. Should we measure the degree of Lebanon’s ‘artificiality’ then it is possible to argue that only part of post-1920 Lebanon was artificially added to the territorial and political core of the *Mutasarrifiyya* of Mount Lebanon, whose legal and political status was established and had international recognition prior to the process of state formation following the end of the First World War.

In post-1920 Lebanon, specifically during the French mandate, Lebanon acquired the essential features of a modern state. A constitution was adopted in 1926, a parliament was established, a central government administration was created, new bureaucracies were formed and a new political elite associated with the politics of the new state emerged. The evolution of Lebanon’s post-1920 state followed a pattern similar to that of other newly created states in the region, notably in the Arab East.

By the time Lebanon became independent in the mid-1940s, all the attributes of a classic post-colonial state were in place, if not by the standards of older states, certainly by regional standards and by those existing in the emerging states of the Third World. Lebanon also enjoyed an early comparative advantage over many other states in the region and in comparison with several other states in the Third World. In addition to being one of the six founding members of the League of Arab States,

Lebanon was a founding member of the United Nations, which comprised fifty one states at the time of its founding in 1945.

By the standards of the newly-created states in the developing countries, the Lebanese state at the time of independence was no less artificial and no less adequately equipped to deal with post-independence problems than other neighbouring states. Moreover, in terms of socio-economic development, Lebanon at the time of independence was more advanced than many other neighbouring countries.

What matters, however, is less the act of state formation than the subsequent process of consolidation and legitimisation of state authority. Here lies the difference between the path taken by the Lebanese state since independence and that of other Arab states.¹¹ And in the divergent patterns of that process lies the difference between the instruments of state control used by authoritarian regimes in the Arab state system and those at the disposal of the Lebanese state.

The Parting of the Ways: The Lebanese State in its Regional Order In the first decade which followed independence, the gap between Lebanon and the rest of the Arab state system began to widen. But the problems that emerged and could have affected Lebanon in a negative way were still manageable. This was in part because the Arab state system remained largely in equilibrium, for no country possessed the ability to tip the balance of power in its favour. As explained by Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, the period 1945–54 witnessed the crystallisation of an Arab state system that was ‘marked by high levels of both conflict and co-operation, with no one state possessing sufficient capabilities either to triumph

decisively over its rivals or to ignore them altogether. The systems *modus operandi* was the fashioning of loosely structured, shifting coalitions derived from temporarily shared interests ... the equilibrium of the system as a whole tended to be maintained.’¹²

By the beginning of the 1950s the increasing gulf between Lebanon and the rest of the Arab state system was becoming a problem and Lebanon gradually parted ways with regional statist politics. The magnitude of change in Lebanon ceased to be commensurate with change in the region. Lebanon’s approach to the expansion of the state apparatus and, by extension, to state power, diverged from that of other Arab countries, particularly in the Arab East.

The notable development in the post-independence period was the rise of the authoritarian state. It rested on five major pillars: military rule, single-party regimes, family rule,¹³ an official ideology of the state, (which is generally a variant of Arab nationalism) and a state-dominated economic system. Arab countries have had one form or another of authoritarian rule. State power increased and the scope of state activity continued to broaden and had a political, social and economic impact on the average person. Commenting on Abdallah Laroui’s characterisation of the Arab state, Nazih Ayubi writes that ‘the Arab state is all body and muscle but with little spirit and mind and with no theory of liberty ... the contemporary Arab state is obsessed with power and strength ... its domain has expanded tremendously at the expense of the freedom of the group and of the individual.’¹⁴

Lebanon, by contrast, was an exception to the norm in the region. As Arab regimes became more exclusive and Arab societies more closed, Lebanon became plural and increasingly open. As Arab regimes drifted towards radicalism, Lebanon drifted towards moderation. As Arab regimes opted for ideological politics, Lebanon opted for pragmatism. As Arab countries were the scene of rapid revolutionary change, Lebanon underwent gradual, non-violent change. And as other Arab states sought to lead the struggle for the liberation of Palestine, Lebanon confined its role to giving political support

and was content to stand on the sidelines. In short, as state-society relations in the Arab countries, notably in the Arab East, underwent political and social transformation in one direction, Lebanon's state-society relations moved both in form and substance in the opposite direction.

These changes by themselves were not conducive to the breakdown of the state, let alone to the outbreak of war. The question is why and when did the divergence of the evolution and role of the state between Lebanon and other Arab countries become politically significant? How did the gap between Lebanon's statist politics and that of the Arab state system affect the performance of the Lebanese state, its power resources and its capacities to use them? The answer lies in the nature of the linkages that exist between Lebanon's internal politics and the regional political scene. Of central importance to Lebanon's open political system is the 'pan' dimension of regional politics, its impact on state-society relations and, by extension, on the performance of the state in times of crisis.

State-Society Relations in Crisis Situations In post-1920 Lebanon, the state came to assert itself by increasing its power over society, particularly after independence in the 1950s and 1960s. However, whatever the level of social control the Lebanese state had prior to the war in the mid-1970s, it fell short of the level attained by the authoritarian state in other Arab countries. The power of the state in Lebanon was not on par with other authoritarian Arab countries. Hence Lebanon's different pattern of state-society relations in comparison with the Arab state system.

In democratic multi-national (or multi-communal) states, society has supremacy over the state. This is the case with Lebanon, as well as with

other countries like Belgium, Switzerland and Canada. However, in multinational states run by authoritarian regimes, such as Nigeria, Sudan, Iraq and the former Yugoslavia the state has supremacy over society.

In crisis situations involving domestic and/or regional issues, state-society relations are put to the test. In conflicts involving strictly internal issues, the equation of power between state and society undergoes little change. Conflict can be contained by the political process: by force in authoritarian regimes and by negotiation and compromise in democratic regimes. But in conflicts involving regional issues and actors, a different power equation between state and society is likely to emerge. Here a distinction should be made between the degree of political interdependence within a regional system. In the Arab regional system, Arab nationalism is a paramount political force which has no parallel in other regional systems. Thus in conflicts involving pan-Arab issues, state-society relations in almost all Arab countries were affected. While Arab regimes had different responses to externally-generated political unrest, in their response the state asserted itself over society. In Lebanon, the process was reversed: society had supremacy over the state.

The State in Crisis Situations: Internal Versus External Crises Since independence in 1943, Lebanon was the scene of one major political crisis in 1952, a short-lived armed conflict in 1958, and a series of crises which began in 1969 and culminated in the war in the mid-1970s. Except for 1952, all other crises had an unambiguous external dimension and were directly linked to change emanating from regional politics. Two kinds of regionally-generated crises have traditionally affected Lebanese politics. One involves inter-Arab politics and rivalry among major Arab states, (Egypt and the countries of the

Arab East), particularly during the Nasserite era. The other is the Arab–Israeli–Palestinian conflict in its post-1967 phase.

In crises involving regional actors and issues, the situation was radically different. Three observations are in order here. First, not all crises in Lebanon's regional order have affected Lebanon's stability. Only crises involving Arab nationalist issues as opposed to crises confined to particular Arab countries made an impact on Lebanon. Second, those regional crises that affected the Lebanese state have also affected other states in the region. Third, crises occurring in Lebanon's immediate regional order – that is, in the Arab East (Syria, Jordan, Iraq, the PLO) and Israel – have had a greater impact on Lebanon than those occurring in the wider regional order. Syria, which controls Lebanon's territorial access to the Arab interior, had the greatest direct influence on Lebanon.

The major regional crises that affected Lebanese politics from independence to the mid-1970s, though in varying degrees and in different ways, include the following: (1) Lebanese–Syrian relations following independence in the second half of the 1940s, notably the economic separation between the two countries; (2) The 1948 Arab–Israeli war and the establishment of the state of Israel; (3) The rise of Nasserism in Arab nationalist politics in the 1950s; (4) The Suez war in 1956 and its regional and international repercussions; (5) The formation of the United Arab Republic in 1958; (6) The 'Arab Cold War' in the first half of the 1960s, involving particularly Nasser and the Ba'thist regimes in Syria and Iraq; (7) The 1967 Arab–Israeli war and the rise of a militant PLO; (8) The military confrontations between the Palestinian guerrillas and the Jordanian army in 1970–71; (9) The 1973 Arab–Israeli war and the parting of the ways between Syria and Egypt in the post-1973 phase of the Arab–Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

While some of these regional events were successfully contained and did not have adverse repercussions on Lebanese politics, others had different implications. The crisis between Lebanon and Syria over the dissolution of the customs union in 1950 was defused by the independence leaders within the consensual framework of the 1943 National Pact.¹⁵ Other crises, which

deepened divisions in Arab politics and led to a power struggle between two or more regimes, had different repercussions on Lebanon. In one regional crisis, the 1948 Arab–Israeli war, on which there was Arab consensus, in so far as the objective of reversing the *fait accompli* of Israel’s existence was concerned, Lebanon was not negatively affected.

In other regional crises instigated by inter-Arab rivalry over political and ideological issues, particularly in the first half of the 1960s – a period which Malcolm Kerr termed the Arab Cold War’¹⁶ – Lebanon’s stability was not affected. Lebanon was spared the destabilising effects of these conflicts partly because its foreign policy since 1958 had been in line with that of Nasser and partly because Arab regimes, mainly Syria and Iraq, were more engaged in violent internal power struggles than in regional power politics.¹⁷

The situation differed with other regional crises. One such crisis revolved around the rise of Nasserism and the changing nature of Arab nationalist politics in the post-independence period.¹⁸ Lebanon, like most Arab countries, was subjected to the tremors provoked by Nasserism. In Syria, Nasserism resulted in a transformation of the country’s internal and regional politics. This culminated in the formation of the United Arab Republic in 1958 under Nasser’s command.¹⁹ The break-up of the Union, three years later, left a bitter legacy of political antagonism and ideological rivalry between Nasser and the Ba’thists. Similarly in pre 1958 Iraq, Nasserite Egypt was the main competitor with the pro-Western Hashemite regime and with the two other ideological and political currents, Ba’thism and Communism after 1958. Indeed, the Nasserite-Ba’thist rivalry very much shaped the course of Iraqi politics in the 1960s.²⁰

Other Arab countries were also affected by Nasserism. Jordan was the scene of an abortive military coup by a pro-Nasserite group in 1957. The PLO, which was founded in 1964, was practically under Nasser’s control.²¹ In Saudi Arabia, apart from the Nasserite challenge to the unity of the royal family, Cairo and Riyadh were engaged in a bloody civil war in Yemen in the first half of the 1960s.²²

Internal disagreement over Nasserism took place in all Arab countries. Lebanese groups in 1958 were divided over the political and ideological content of Lebanon’s Arab face’. But while in other countries the state

opted for one determined action or another, in Lebanon, when it did, the country was engulfed in conflict. In Syria, the state opted for the Union by dissolving itself, despite internal opposition by some groups, especially by the Communist Party. In Hashemite Iraq, there was an open power struggle between Baghdad and Cairo. In Jordan, like in Lebanon, Western military intervention was called upon to offset the military imbalance, while the Saudi response was military confrontation in Yemen.

In short, Lebanon, like other Arab countries, had to generate a new political equilibrium, one that would take into account the Nasserite factor in pan-Arab politics. In Lebanon, like in other Arab countries, the search for a new status quo to adjust to Nasserism involved crises, though the nature of the crises and the approach to contain them differed between Lebanon and other Arab countries.

Lebanon and the PLO: The 'No Man's' State The other source of major crises in regional politics was the Arab–Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Not only did the conflict destabilise the region, it altered the balance of power among Arab states and between them and Israel. These developments had far reaching consequences in Lebanon. Whereas the consequences of the first Arab–Israeli war in 1948 were overshadowed by subsequent events in Arab politics in the aftermath of the rise of military regimes, the second Arab-Israeli confrontation in 1956 added fuel to the Nasserite fire. But the decisive turning point in the Arab-Israeli conflict in its post-1948 phase was the 1967 war and the political and military repercussions it had on the Arab world,

Israel and on the policies of the major powers in the Middle East. Whether it was the Waterloo of Pan-Arabism,²³ or the end of Nasserism or the assertion of Israel's military power, or the spark that ignited Palestinian nationalism, the 1967 war was an earth-shattering event for many Arab countries. The 1967 war provoked sweeping change in Arab and Israeli politics and, by extension, in regional power politics.

What concerns us here are those changes affecting Lebanon in the late 1960s and the first half of the 1970s. These changes can be assessed at four levels: (i) inter-Arab politics; (ii) Arab-Palestinian politics; (iii) Arab–Israeli politics; (iv) Palestinian –Israeli politics.

Unlike the 1950s, when Nasser's Egypt constituted the dominant power in inter-Arab politics, after 1967 Nasser's monopoly was broken. A number of developments took place on the post-1967 Arab-Israeli scene. First, the rise of a revolutionary PLO led by a new generation of militants committed to armed struggle against Israel.²⁴ Second, the discrediting of the 'revolutionary' elite of the earlier period. By the late 1960s, Nasser became a 'reactionary' leader in the eyes of the new post-1967 'revolutionary' elite – just like the 'reactionary' elite of the *ancien regime* against whom Nasser and other Arab leaders revolted two decades earlier.

The third development has to do with the greater diversification of the currencies of power in Arab politics. Military power and ideological influence were no longer sufficient; economic power was now equally important, hence the increasing role and influence of Saudi Arabia and other oil rich Gulf states. Another development is the consolidation of the authoritarian state and the increasing political and ideological 'maturity' of regimes like Syria and Iraq. Finally, two divergent trends, both the direct outcome of the Arab defeat in the 1967 war, polarised Arab politics: a 'conservatising force' driving erstwhile radical regimes towards moderation, and a radicalising force driving others toward increasing maximalism.²⁵

As in the 1950s, when Lebanese politics reflected change in the power equation of regional politics at the height of Nasserism, Lebanese politics in the post-1967 period reflected change in the regional order. The new development after 1967 was the rise of militant Palestinian nationalism. The PLO did not represent an ideological platform or a political current; it was a revolution seeking to liberate its homeland while drawing support from a refugee population and established communities in a number of Arab countries.

In the same way as in the days of Nasserism, Arab regimes had to devise policies to deal with the emerging Palestinian factor in Arab politics. The political and military weight of the PLO was felt first in Jordan. It was also felt in two other confrontation states, Syria and Egypt and, of course, in Lebanon. Just as it did in the 1950s, the Lebanese state's response to the PLO differed from that of other Arab states. The question is not why it differed, for this has to do with the nature of Lebanon's open political system. Rather, it is why the changing power equation in regional politics since 1967 has been detrimental to stability in Lebanon. Similarly, what kind of change has taken place within Lebanon, and how did this influence state-society relations and therefore the state's handling of the PLO in the 1970s?

One way to address these questions is to indicate the differences between Lebanon's internal politics and regional scene in the 1950s and those of the late 1960s and 1970s? On the regional scene, there was sweeping change. First, the Palestinian armed struggle was a radicalising force in inter-Arab and Arab-Israeli politics. Second, the full political and military mobilisation of the Palestinian refugee population was a new development in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Third, the pan-Arab nature of the Palestinian problem after 1967 had completely different political and military implications from the pan-Arab platform of Nasserism in the 1950s and 1960s. Nasser headed a major Arab state and was a dominant political figure in the Arab world. The PLO, by contrast, had yet to establish its own state, and Arafat possessed neither the status nor the power that Nasser had in Arab politics.

Internally, the post-1967 scene was pregnant with unprecedented developments. First, a mobilised revolutionary movement based in Lebanon and operating outside the control of the state was a far cry from a populist political current like Nasserism. Needless to say, there is a difference

between pressure that an embassy staff can exercise in a country – as was the case of the Egyptian embassy in Lebanon in the 1950s – and the ‘staff’ of a revolutionary movement engaged in military confrontations in Lebanon and engaged in war against Israel. It is one thing to deal with Nasser’s supporters in Lebanon, but it is another to deal with a mobilised and armed refugee population. Second, the Lebanese army did not take part in the 1958 crisis and was not the target of attack, but beginning in 1969 the army was the main target of attack by the PLO guerrillas. Third, since 1948, when Lebanon took part in the first Arab-Israeli war, no military confrontations had taken place between Lebanon and Israel. After 1967, south Lebanon became the scene of warfare, though the state was not formally at war with Israel.

Fourth, in 1958 turmoil lasted six months and was ended following the election of a new president. In 1969, by contrast, the first political crisis linked to the PLO armed presence lasted more than six months and was ended only after the Lebanese government had to sign an agreement with the PLO (The Cairo Agreement).²⁶ Fifth, unlike in the 1950s, when only two main groups were engaged in conflict, the political scene beginning in the late 1960s was highly factionalised. A large number of protagonists were involved and an equally large number of issues were at stake.

Sixth, in the late 1950s, political compromise was possible, for the Maronite and Sunni political elites were still in a position to end turmoil, once the external dimension of conflict was contained. In the 1970s, however, differences between government and opposition were complex as was the confessional and ideological divide. An agreement between the Maronite president and the Sunni prime minister – assuming that the external dimension of conflict was contained – was no longer sufficient to contain conflict in the first half of the 1970s. New power centres emerged, notably the Left led by Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt who contested both the Maronite and Sunni elites.

In conclusion, while in the late 1950s Nasserism initially was a destabilising factor in Lebanon, it ended up becoming a stabilising factor, which helped end the 1958 crisis. By contrast, in the 1970s, the PLO was not only a destabilising factor it also militarised and accelerated conflict. The PLO, unlike Nasserism, prevented the termination of conflict and

opened Lebanon to the destabilising influences emanating from inter-Arab and Arab–Israeli politics. This affected both Lebanon and the PLO. But the difference was that the Lebanese state was destabilised while the PLO’s de facto state in Lebanon flourished.

One way to examine the process of change in relation to the period under study is to compare the instruments of power that are at the disposal of the Lebanese state and those of the Arab state system. This is discussed in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 See Hourani, 'Lebanon: Development...', pp. 124–41.
- 2 On the *Mutasarrifiyya*, see Engin Akarli, *The Long Peace...*; Karam Rizk, *Le Mont Liban au Dixneuvième Siècle. De l'Imara à la Mutasarrifiyya* (Kaslik: Université Saint-Esprit, 1994); 'Abdallah al-Mallah, *Mutasarrifiyyat Jabal Lubnanfi 'Ahd Muzaffar Basha, 1902–1907* (Beirut: Mu'assassat Khalifeh, 1985); Asad Rustum, *Lubnanfi 'Ahd alMutasarrifiyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar Lilnashr, 1973).
- 3 See Spagnolo, *France...* See also René Ristelhuber, *Traditions Françaises au Liban* (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1918).
- 4 See Jouplain, *La Question...* See also Marwan Buheiry, 'Bulus Nujaym and the Grand Liban Ideal 1908–1919', in Marwan R. Buheiry (ed.) *Intellectual Life in the Arab East* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981).
- 5 Akarli, *The Long Peace...*, p. 190.
- 6 Ibid., p. 184.
- 7 Harik, 'The Origins...', p. 6.
- 8 Ibid., p. 19.
- 9 For a comparative survey of state formation in the modern Arab world, see Ayubi, *Over-Stating...*, pp. 86–134.
- 10 Fromkin, *A Peace...*, pp. 173–99, 435, 454, 493–539.
- 11 See Ghassan Salamé, *Al-Mujtama' wa al-Dawla fi al-Mashriq al 'Arabi* (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wihda al-'Arabiyya, 1987): 117–75.
- 12 Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–54* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993): 176.
- 13 See Roger Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of The Modern Middle East*, (London: Routledge, 1992): 55–80.
- 14 Ayubi, *Over-Stating...*, pp. 22–4.
- 15 See Nabil Frangié and Zeina Frangié, *Hamid Frangié, L'autre Liban*, vol. 1 (Beirut: FMA, 1993): 267–316.
- 16 Kerr, *The Arab Cold War...*
- 17 See the revealing editorials by *al-Nahar* columnist Michel Abu Jawdeh, *Al-Watan alSaghir wa al-Dawr al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar Lilnashr, 1993): 179–311.
- 18 See, for example, Leonard Binder, *The Ideological Revolution in the Middle East* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964): 198–229; Kerr, *The Arab Cold War...*; P. J. Vatikiotis, *Nasser and His Generation* (London: Croom Helm, 1978); Louis 'Awad, *Aqni'at al-Nasiriyya al-Saba'* (Beirut: Dar al-Ruqi, 1978).
- 19 See Seale, *The Struggle for Syria...*
- 20 See Kerr, *The Arab Cold War...* On the more recent period, see Eberhard Kienle, *Ba'th vs Ba'th, the Conflict Between Syria and Iraq 1968–1989* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990).
- 21 See Moshe Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity, 1959–1974 Arab Politics and the PLO* (London: Frank Cass: 1988): 37–94.
- 22 See Nadav Safran, *Saudi Arabia: The Ceaseless Quest for Security* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press; 1985), 73–112. See also Ghassan Salamé, *Al-Siyasa al-Kharijiyya alSu'diyyaMunzu 'Am*

1945. *Dirasa fi-al-'Alaqat al-Dawliyya* (Beirut: Ma'had al-Inma' al-'Arabi, 1980): 155–221.

23 Fouad Ajami, 'The End of Pan-Arabism', *Foreign Affairs* 57 (Winter 1978–79): 355–73.

24 See Hisham Sharabi, *Palestine Guerrillas; Their Credibility and Effectiveness* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1970).

25 See Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981): 137–200.

26 See Chapter 12: The Making of the Cairo Agreement, pp. 140–7.

9

The Porous Lebanese State and the Arab State System

Arab regimes differ in the sources and degree of legitimacy they enjoy¹ and in the political causes they champion, as well as in the internal problems they face. In most Arab countries, the consolidation of state power has come at a price: freedom and political pluralism. Since independence, Arab states have succeeded, though in different ways and at different times, in achieving the following: first, in giving the state significant autonomy to rule; second, in creating a class to govern and an 'official' enemy to repress; third, in perpetuating the control of the ruling elite by relying on the military; fourth, in eliminating potentially threatening internal opposition.

Whether in the name of the state, the party, or the monarch, rule was exercised by a self-styled 'vanguard' of society whose authority was beyond question – except when toppled by rival factions usually drawn from the military. Lebanon, by contrast, had none of these lofty ideals to uphold, or a monarch, or a ruling party that claimed monopoly on political thought. Instead, Lebanon had a political order, which was not allergic to political freedom and an army obedient to the civilian leadership.

As explained before, at the time of independence, that is, immediately after the ending of Western rule, no Arab state, particularly in the Arab East, had acquired greater power, whether political or military, and had greater legitimacy than the Lebanese state. Subsequent political unrest in countries like Syria, Iraq and Jordan was an indication of the feeble foundations of the post-colonial state. Not until the emergence of military rule did the state

in many Arab countries gain effective power and a significant measure of autonomy.

Although the power of the state in Lebanon had continued to increase in the post-independence period, it enjoyed little immunity against the one-man rule which characterised Arab states, with which it had to interact. This vulnerability was compounded by the fact that the Lebanese state lacked those instruments of control necessary to enhance its power, particularly in crisis situations linked to pan-Arab politics.

Instruments of Control: The Lebanese State versus the Arab State System Several factors differentiate the Lebanese state from the Arab state system. They include the following. First, the dual nature of state power in Lebanon was a source of weakness and vulnerability, particularly in crisis situations. This bipolarity is, in a way, the result of the uneasy birth of the 1943 National Pact based on a dual Christian-Muslim compromise: a negative multiple of two both in domestic politics and in Lebanon's relations with Arab and Western countries.² Other Arab states received the support of foreign sponsors, but were subject to the authority of one supreme leader. Lebanon's statist politics, by contrast, were subjected to two powerbrokers: the Maronite president and the Sunni prime minister.

Lebanon's double-headed executive had to reconcile Maronite-Sunni differences and preserve the communal basis of the 1943 compromise.³ As prominent journalist Georges Naccache wrote in 1949, 'la folie est d'avoir

élevé un compromis à la hauteur d'une doctrine d'état – d'avoir traité l'accident comme une chose stable – d'avoir cru, enfin que deux 'non' pouvaient, en politique, produire un 'oui.'⁴ That 'foolish' arrangement was, after all, the inevitable outcome of the changing political scene in the 1940s both in Lebanon and the region, which in turn facilitated independence.

Second, the Lebanese state is something of an anomaly; it is the only member state in the Arab League headed by a Christian president whose field of action has questionable Arab – and, of course, Muslim – legitimacy. At best, the Lebanese head of state can do one of two things: assume the role of a 'neutral' moderator among rival Arab regimes, or perhaps play a symbolic role in projecting a secular image of Arabism by diluting the otherwise Muslim colouring of state-based Arabism. In this way, Lebanon's Maronite president is constantly reminded of the limits of his power internally as well as within the regional system. The strong state he would aspire to rule is highly dependent on both internal Muslim support and Arab regimes' willingness, particularly Syria, to tolerate the emergence of assertive state control in Lebanon, notably in times of regional turmoil.

This brings us to the other instrument of state control in Arab politics, which was not at the disposal of the Lebanese state: a war effort in the name of various 'sacred causes.' Contrary to most Arab states, the state in Lebanon had no well-defined cause to fight for, whether against Israel or against rival Arab regimes or other proclaimed 'enemies of the revolution'. The 1948 Arab–Israeli war was the only military confrontation in which Lebanon took part. And since Lebanon did not regard itself as a bastion of Arab nationalism or as a major defender of Arab interests against Israel and 'Western imperialism', the 1948 defeat was less of a debacle for Lebanon than it was for other Arab regimes. The 1949 armistice agreement between Lebanon and Israel confirmed the international borders between the two countries, which had already been drawn in the early 1920s. This agreement went into effect and was respected by both countries, until PLO guerrillas, beginning in the late 1960s, violated it.

While Lebanon supported Arab causes, it had neither the ambition nor the motivation to participate in Arab–Israeli wars. Arab victories were celebrated in the streets of Beirut and defeats were mourned, but that was all that Beirut could offer. It provided breathing space for the masses to

demonstrate, for dissidents to seek refuge, and for Arab ideologues to debate and publicise ideas and slogans. The Lebanese state lacked the means either to neutralise external ideological threats or to mobilise an Arab nationalist following of its own. Such practices fell beyond the 'expertise' of the Lebanese state, for it had no 'pan' causes to champion and no revolution to export.

Lebanon did not produce leaders who aspired to pan-Arab leadership. It had no Arab heroes who were in a position to compete with Nasser, Arafat, Asad and other influential Arab leaders. Lebanon's most qualified candidate for pan-Arab leadership was Riad al-Solh.⁵ But Solh was assassinated before his leadership skills and Arab credentials were put to the test, at the height of Nasserism. Lebanon, instead, produced leaders whose political ambitions were confined to Lebanon.

Nor did Lebanon have credible ideologues to propagate Arab unity or revolutionary change. Rather, Lebanon was an ideologically subdued place when it came to state-based politics, contrary to what Arab nationalists would have desired. By the time Lebanon was electing its second president, Syria, for example, was already in its third *coup d'état*. And in the mid-1960s, when Nasser was bogged down in the civil war in Yemen, Lebanon was in the midst of the Chehabist reformist era.

While the absence of a war agenda, both internal or external, in the politics of the Lebanese state helped preserve democratic stability and promote economic prosperity, it did little to enhance state power vis-à-vis other Arab states. Thus, being one of the few Arab states having no territorial claims to neighbouring countries and having no occupied land to liberate, Lebanon had no wars to wage and no enemy regimes to topple.

Since Lebanon did not engage in state-sponsored warfare, there was no need for a large military establishment and for permanent military mobilisation. As a consequence, the army assumed a minor role in Lebanese politics. Lebanon was the least militarised state in the Arab world.⁶ Contrary to the prevailing Arab practice, the military in Lebanon was not transformed into the praetorian guard of the state, whose leaders rose to power from within its ranks. General Chehab, Lebanon's most prominent military commander and builder of the army after independence, shunned political office on several occasions, and his election to the presidency in

1958 was in part an act of national reconciliation.⁷ Thus civil-military relations in Lebanon took on a different form and performed political and institutional functions, which differed from those encountered in other Arab states.⁸ But that made the state vulnerable to regional unrest when competing with military-ruled Arab regimes.

The absence of war efforts is in part linked to the lack of an official state ideology – another instrument of control not at the disposal of the Lebanese state. Besides a vague, moderate version of Arab nationalism, Lebanon could only embrace those ideological currents championed by dominant Arab leaders. Failing that, a clash might ensue, as was the case in 1958.

Without an ideology of its own and a party apparatus to publicise it, the Lebanese state had no ideological commodity to export to a larger Arab audience. ‘Down to earth’ Lebanon had no ‘philosophy of the revolution’ to propagate, no Green Book to offer, and no Arab socialist doctrines to interpret. The best the Lebanese state could offer was a soft ‘ideology’ of political pragmatism known as confessionalism. But that was self-defeating, for not only did confessionalism have little Arab appeal, it was viewed as the quintessential reactionary political formula against which some Arab regimes declared ideological and political war.

Lebanon’s communal particularities made the state opt for a middle-ground approach embodied in the so-called ‘mission of co-existence’ between Islam and Christianity. This pragmatic concept left little room for the ambitious schemes of revolutionary change, such as the creation of a new social order as a first step on the road of uniting the Arab world and defeating Israel. The Lebanese state had little to say about such grand objectives.

As Arab leaders were competing for the same pan-Arab audience, Lebanon’s pragmatic political elite was unimpressed with Arab socialist achievements and saw no need to capitalise on Arab setbacks. Instead, Lebanese leaders opted for political and economic liberalism. Phrases like the ‘corrective movement’ or the ‘revolutionary military council’ were alien to Lebanon’s political jargon.

The missing ‘pan’ dimension in state politics, however, had its drawbacks; it made Lebanon a vulnerable recipient of Arab power politics and gave the state limited capacity to fight back. The state in Lebanon had to confront the

thrusting force of an incompatible blend of concepts revolving around nationalism, unity and socialism. Faced with the mercantilist nature of Arab ideological trade, the Lebanese state suffered a permanent deficit. And with a thin ideological platform to fall back on, the state was confronted by regional problems not of its own making: that of containing the repercussions of Arab identity crises and inter-Arab conflicts.

The absence of state ideology also meant the absence of a ruling party. Lebanon was the only Arab country that did not develop a single-party regime.⁹ Political parties in Lebanon reflected a diverse spectrum of political, communal and ideological orientations and were able to compete in the electoral process and affect the outcome, particularly in the first half of the 1970s. In authoritarian single-party regimes the party serves as an effective instrument of social control. In Lebanon, parties performed other functions, but were not an instrument of social control by the state.

Another impediment to state control in inter-Arab politics stemmed from Lebanon's liberal economic system. The Lebanese state had no reason, whether economic or political, to adopt policies of nationalisation. Lebanon had neither a 'suez Canal' company to nationalise nor multinational corporations, which monopolised the country's resources to control. These policies pursued by many developing countries, including oil-rich Arab countries, have enhanced state power and, by extension, the domination of the ruling elite. Nor did the Lebanese state have to resort to radical economic policies to cover up political failure, as was the case in some Arab countries, notably in Nasser's Egypt.¹⁰ Even more reassuring to Lebanon's economic liberalism was that state-run economies in Third World countries have failed to achieve their intended objectives of economic development.

A by-product of Lebanon's open economic system is the comparatively small size of the public sector. In many Arab countries, the public sector is a potent instrument of economic and political control, for it is the country's largest employer and, in some instances, the employer of last resort.¹¹ It also serves as an important channel for party control. Lebanon's public sector performs no such functions and, consequently, deprives the state of an important means to exert authority.

Moreover, the successful performance of Lebanon's market economy has deprived the state of another instrument of control: the monopoly on outside financing of development projects through loans or aids given by government or international organisations. In many developing countries the foreign debt factor helps project the image of the state and its rulers as the spokesmen for the people and the articulators of their concerns. The national debt syndrome was non-existent in pre-war Lebanon. Although this was a healthy economic indicator, it deprived the ruling elite of an effective tool for exerting greater state control. And in other areas of economic activity, such as foreign trade, Lebanon had no one major commodity to export – for example, cotton in Egypt and oil in the Gulf – and the state had little incentive to pursue interventionist policies.

Another important instrument of state influence and control, which Lebanon lacked, was the absence of a rentier state.¹² The Lebanese government was neither the recipient of large wealth nor the distributor of national wealth. Nor did it have strategic commodities or reserves that it could afford to squander. The Lebanese state did not undertake large scale welfare programmes, which, among other things could serve to neutralise internal discontent while enhancing the state's authority as well as its legitimacy. This is the case of oil-rich Gulf countries, of which Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are prime examples.¹³ The Lebanese state, by contrast, lacked the financial resources to pursue such policies to keep the opposition at bay, or to finance armed groups to foment trouble in other countries, as was the case in other oil-rich countries such as Libya and Iraq.

While the Lebanese state did not resort to central planning, it had little political incentive to widen the scope of state intervention. Lebanon was one of the few developing countries that had a functional and large private sector. In various economic and non-economic fields, institutions of the private sector took the lead. For example, in education, though the state could have done much more to support the public education system, it did not start from scratch. Unlike other Arab countries, which had a low literacy rate and a limited infrastructure for a nationwide educational system, Lebanon, at the time of independence, had two of the best private universities in the Middle East and a relatively high literacy rate. In

addition, the state did not undertake massive political socialisation through the educational system to inculcate the teachings of the revolution or to Arabise education, as was the case in other Arab countries.

In sum, the socio-economic instrument was not sufficiently used by the Lebanese state, partly because the state chose not to make use of it either because it sought to keep communal prerogatives intact, or because there was little incentive and/or pressure to use it. In reality, state intervention is a double-edged sword, as short of keeping the necessary momentum for the positive outcome of a policy of state interventionism, the process may become counterproductive, as was the case in many developing countries. But the state in Lebanon could have played a more effective role in narrowing socio-economic inequalities and regional disparities, which could have enhanced national unity while at the same enabling the state to exercise greater social control. Indeed, the state did launch one major drive toward long-term planning through state intervention under President Chehab. But that attempt was short-lived.

Moreover, Lebanon drifted from the general Arab pattern in another instrument of statist politics: the process of bureaucratisation. Lebanon's state bureaucracy was relatively small compared to other Arab countries and its expansion was limited. The expansion of the state bureaucracy, which began in the 1950s, occurred in all Arab countries, in rich and poor states, as well as in radical and conservative regimes. While this expansion can be attributed to several political and economic factors, it has served as an instrument of control in most Arab states. As Nazih Ayubi put it: 'most Arab rulers find in the machine bureaucracy a useful control device, and most executives find it a means of acquiring authority and exercising influence. Most Arab rulers and executives want to see their bureaucracies play a part in developing their countries, but in their real order of priorities, power often comes before development.'¹⁴ The bureaucracy as a control device was of limited usefulness in Lebanon.

Another element that helps enhance state power and its ability to use force against the opposition stems from historical and religious tradition. Here too the Lebanese state was at a disadvantage.¹⁵ There is little in Lebanese history that can justify or legitimise the consolidation of authoritarian rule similar to that of other Arab countries.

Unlike Egypt, for example, Lebanon has not experienced a tradition of strong central authority.¹⁶ In Egypt it was that element of less-than-absolute resistance to central authorities that made the relationship between rulers and ruled less destabilising to society. Were it not for that essential ingredient of *sulta*, itself buttressed by a Pharaonic and/or Islamic past,¹⁷ the political derailment of modern Egypt at the hands of two men, Nasser and Sadat, would hardly have been possible. While it is true that several structural factors helped shape the government process, it was, in the end, that considerable dose of popular submission to authority that restricted power disputes to the corridors of the 'people's palaces'.

In Lebanon, by contrast, 19th-century Mount Lebanon politics initiated a reversal in the process of strong central rule. Power relationships in the *Imarah* rested on traditional sources of authority embodied in the *iqta'* system. Mount Lebanon was a society in which authority was exercised more against rival power-brokers than against the peasantry. The imperatives of rule by two ambitious amirs, Fakhr al-Din II and Bashir II, paved the way for the early foundation of central authority in the Mountain. Lebanon's Amirs, like other rulers in pursuit of power, made friends and enemies among their subjects and in their dealings with outsiders. They defied the Ottoman Sultan and sought alliances with Western and regional powers.

The question that concerns us here is a comparison between the respective power consolidation process of Bachir II and Muhammad Ali of Egypt, and the different outcomes ensuing from each process. Thus, by the time the former was dispossessed of his reign, the latter had created a dynasty which survived, in one form or another, for over a century and a half. By examining the differences and similarities between the political careers of these two men, it is possible to shed light on the evolutionary pattern of authority in Lebanon's political culture.

While they had sustained an alliance for at least a decade, the Ottoman pasha and the Amir differed in several respects. First, the Amir was an indigenous mountain chieftain, while the Pasha of the Nile was an Ottoman subject of Albanian background. What the latter was able to achieve in Egypt was beyond the ability and power of the Shihabi Amir. The internal power consolidation was too costly for the Amir. It mobilised a coalition of

powerful leaders who were able to deprive the Amir of a greatly needed intersectorian power base. That Muhammad Ali was an outsider to Egypt was no small advantage for consolidating rule: a 'privilege' simply unavailable to the Shihabi Amir. Egypt's Ottoman military commander literally exterminated local Mamluk rivals.

By contrast, Amir Bashir was the descendant of a prominent family whose political fortunes were tied to Mount Lebanon's politics. The Shihabis claimed the *Imara* by virtue of their kinship with the Ma'ni House, rather than because they were the most powerful lordly family in the Mountain. Bashir's power was greatly dependent on the support he could secure from other powerful Maronite and Druze leaders. He could alienate some influential power brokers, but by no means all. Obviously, he was unable to liquidate them, even had he tried to follow Muhammad Ali's example. Moreover, Ibrahim Pasha's (Muhammad Ali's son) attempt to apply the Egyptian model of centralised state rule in the Mountain – by playing off one community against another – backfired and led to the intersectorian rebellion against the Egyptian army. Thus, what was possible in Egypt was simply unsuitable to Mount Lebanon's society.

Another striking difference between the two cases is the comparative timing of the power consolidation process. Once again, Lebanon's Amir faced an unfavourable external environment. His open defiance of Ottoman authorities coincided with the increasing centrality of the Eastern Question in the affairs of the Ottoman empire. The European powers, particularly the French and the British were, by then, ready to intervene in any new power-balancing in the Mountain. Their intervention was bound to develop along communal lines. In fact, from the 1840s onward, Mount Lebanon's internal politics mirrored conflicting European and/or Ottoman interests.

Muhammad Ali, however, was less affected by European rivalries at the time of his son's defeat in Syria and eventual retreat from the Mountain. It was much later that his rule was threatened by the unfolding complexities of European rivalries in the region, especially with the growing strategic importance of Egypt for British interests to secure the maritime route to India. By that time, Egypt had acquired firm state control whether under local or British authority.

The configuration of internal and external forces that tore apart the *Imara*'s authority had – by their very different mechanisms and effects on

Egyptian society – led to the emergence of firm state authority in Egypt. And with the collapse of the *Imara*, the process of communal disintegration began. It was finally reversed in the early 1860s, but only after two decades of turmoil. However, a unitary rule based on effective central authority was not revived under the *Mutasarrifiyya*. In post-1920 Lebanon a unitary state was formed alongside the confessional system.

The lack of a long tradition of autocratic rule kept Lebanese society's threshold of tolerance of a strong state relatively low. But the tradition of weak authority historically is not unique to Lebanon; it is shared by many of its neighbouring countries. With the notable exception of Egypt, beginning in the early 19th century, modern state constructs in the Arab world had no particularly strong central authority at the time of independence. It was mainly in the post-independence period that Arab regimes came to monopolise power at the centre. Whatever *sulta* existed, it was gradually overcome by the state. Lebanon, however, failed to keep up with the momentum of *sulta*-making that characterised the general Arab political practice. In such endeavours, religious tradition and historical heritage were of significant help.

The creation and consolidation of the Saudi state through the blend of religious radicalism and military conquests is a case in point.¹⁸ The rulers in modern Syria, for example, can claim the Umayyad heritage to legitimise power and expansionism, and Iraq's rulers may find it expedient to claim the Abbasid past to justify Ba'thist 'jihad' against Persian Iran, while the Saudi and Hashemite monarchies can legitimise authority by extolling the Islamic past and tradition. The Lebanese state, however, had none of these powerful religious and historical symbolisms.¹⁹ Lebanon's state symbolism was man-made: confessional coexistence and religious tolerance.

Elements of Islamic and Arab symbolism were simply beyond the reach of the Lebanese state, for its Arab background is of recent origin and is widely contested, while its Islamic heritage is claimed by only one segment of Lebanese society. Even this can be counterproductive, because in Lebanon the Islamic heritage embodies the deep divide between Sunni and Shia Islam. This historical handicap in Lebanon's place on the Arab and/or Muslim political map has curtailed the state's ability to plead its case on an equal footing with other Arab regimes, particularly in times of crisis.

Unable to claim a monopoly over the means of reviving ancient Arab glories, defending Islam, championing revolutionary Arab nationalism, or even demolishing the remnants of Western colonialism, the Lebanese state could aspire to embody an incompatible mix of these various orientations. It could also – as it did – add its home-grown contribution: that of the Mediterranean middle ground which encompasses both Christian and Muslim heritage. And to cater to the zealots' wider imagination, Lebanon's 'Phoenicianism' was always a convenient claim to revive.

These elements of myth-making were of little use to the Lebanese state. Beirut could hardly compete with the Islamic glories of Damascus or Baghdad. Lebanon's Muftis, let alone its several ancient Patriarchal Sees, were no match to Mecca or al-Azhar in the inter-state power politics of the modern Arab world. Needless to say, the Cedars, Ba'albak and the snow-capped mountains offered only weak symbolic shelter to the hapless Lebanese state.

In conclusion, the expansion of state apparatus in the Arab world, and the consolidation of state power and state control over the political process, the economy, along with the social, the legal and educational systems, as well as over the religious establishment have characterised the authoritarian state in the post-independence period. The state in Lebanon, lacking the types of large and powerful authoritarian structures, could neither control nor re-make nor re-order those groups within society which hampered its authority and curtailed its coercive capabilities, as was the case in other Arab states.²⁰

'Republic of Fear' versus Lebanon's Convivial Republic The state in Lebanon did not practice the most widely used instrument of control in the Arab world as well as in other Third world countries: organised repression practised by the state's 'institutions of violence'.²¹ Lebanon was one of the few Arab countries, which had no secret police and no state-sponsored militia. Nor did Lebanon have

political prisoners, nor were government authorities implicated in political assassinations. The only time government authorities resorted to coercive action was against the Syrian Social Nationalist Party: in 1949 when party leader Antoun Sa'adeh was executed, and in 1961–62 when the SSNP coup was aborted. In both instances, the government was reacting against an armed takeover, that is, after the deed.

Moreover, Lebanon was the only Arab country which held regular parliamentary and presidential elections. Despite irregularities, elections provided an important outlet for change. Lebanon was also the only Arab country where former government officials retired in their family homes after leaving office and not in forced exile, as is the case of the leaders of the opposition in other Arab countries. They also continue to engage in the political process, as is the practice with former government officials in democratic countries.

Lebanon was also the only Arab country which enjoyed fairly open borders and imposed no restrictions on travel. No people disappeared while on their way in and out of the country. Nor were there restrictions on the transfer of money. Lebanon had an open market economy and an internationalised private-run banking system. If by Arab standards, 'the republic of fear' was the norm,²² particularly in states with which Lebanon had to interact in the Arab East, the Arab norm did not apply to Lebanon. Lebanon's republic, in comparison, was convivial.

The Zero-Sum Game in a Saturated Arab State System The different paths to the consolidation of state power and the various instruments of control that are at the disposal of the state in Lebanon, as

opposed to other Arab states, acquire political significance when put to the test. Thus the weakness of the Lebanese state turned into a handicap when it had to deal with crises emanating from the regional order over which the state in Lebanon had little control and limited room to manoeuvre.

Lebanon was not able to influence Arab decision-making: Arab wars, peace and erratic alliances. Yet these decisions, and the changes they provoked, had negative repercussions on the Lebanese political system and, consequently, on the state. In such crises the state in Lebanon found itself competing with other Arab states to shield itself from their spill-over. In such political competition, the above-mentioned instruments of control become of limited use to help place Lebanon on an equal footing with other Arab regimes.

In the days of Nasserism, pan-Arab power politics were loose and the Arab political space, composed of state actors, was wide and varied. There was room for the different variants of Arabism to compete. In the 1950s and 1960s, Arab regimes had not yet developed tight authoritarian structures of government. Military coups were frequent, as was the case in Syria and Iraq, and the overthrow of the *ancien regime* was still possible, as was the case in Libya. As for conservative Arab regimes in the Gulf and elsewhere, they became more closed, more secure and wealthier than before.

But after 1967, the emergence of the Palestinian revolution occurred at a time when the Arab political space had reached a saturation point. Those radical regimes that lost territories in the 1967 war became more cautious and more calculating. Now there was a small margin for error. Resources were scarce and any political squandering was costly. Arab regimes, particularly those that were in a state of war with Israel, had to draw on their strategic reserves to liberate their national territories rather than Palestine.

All this occurred at a time when the PLO, now in its militant phase, sought to carve out a place of its own on the regional and international political map. Not only was political space lacking, territorial space had to

be found for a non-state actor seeking to liberate its occupied land by armed struggle. In such a zero-sum game, there was no room for compromise, nor were half-solutions possible. Rather, the law of winners and losers prevailed.

The threat to the post-1967 status quo had particularities of its own. This, in turn, reflected the particularities of the Palestinian revolutionary movement and Arab nationalism in regional politics. In other regional systems, turmoil in one country might destabilise another. An extreme case was that of Cambodia which was overrun by neighbouring Vietnam. Likewise in Central America, neighbouring countries to revolutionary Nicaragua in the 1980s were destabilised. In Lebanon's immediate regional order, in the Arab East, destabilisation in the 1970s involved a non-state actor seeking not to overthrow an enemy regime in an existing state, as is usually the case, but to liberate its occupied national territories and proclaim a state of its own. But occupation was not a classic one, that is, at the hands of a colonial power, but by a state at war with neighbouring countries and one which had military superiority over all Arab states combined.

Moreover, in the post-War II international system there was no 'pan' revolutionary movement like the PLO. No similar 'cases' were recorded in other regional orders (such as the African liberation movements (ANC, SWAPO and FLN during the Algerian revolution). Nor was there a 'case' similar to that of Israel either as a project for a state before 1948 or, subsequently, as a state viewed by its Arab neighbours as a foreign implant which had to be extracted altogether. The opposition, which some countries faced in its regional order, like in the case of former Rhodesia and White-ruled South Africa, was different from the opposition that Israel encountered in its regional order. These were the anomalies of regional politics that Lebanon had to deal with since the late 1960s.

With a de facto Palestinian 'nation-state' in exile seeking to assert itself in a closed Arab state system, the state in Lebanon found itself locked in a power struggle with other Arab states over the saturated political and territorial space of the nation-state in the Arab East. In such a power struggle, the state in Lebanon was not in a position to draw on those instruments of control that were at the disposal of other Arab states.

After 1967, Lebanon's non-authoritarian state was the de facto weakest player, for the rules of the game were detrimental to states whose decisions were conditioned by the priorities and wishes of their societies, all the more so in times of crisis. Whether 'the casualties of nonstateness ... far outweigh the casualties of stateness,'²³ in Lebanon's weak yet non-oppressive state, as argued by Gabriel Ben-Dor, is a debatable question. But in a regional order composed of democratic states, whether weak or strong, Lebanon's weak and open state would not have been a handicap, nor an arena for inter-state feuds. Lebanon's dilemma can be explained by comparing its response to the post-1967 PLO to that of Jordan.

Notes

- 1 See Michael C. Hudson, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).
- 2 See Farid el Khazen, *The Communal Pact...*
- 3 See Malcolm Kerr, 'Political Decision-Making in a Confessional Democracy, in Leonard Binder (ed.) *Politics in Lebanon* (New York: John Wiley, 1966): 187–212.
- 4 Georges Naccache, editorial in *L'Orient* March 10, 1949. Naccache was briefly detained and the newspaper was suspended following the writing of this editorial entitled 'Deux negations ne font pas une nation'. See the collection of essays by Naccache in *Un Rêve Libanais, 1943–1972* (Beirut: Editions FMA, 1983).
- 5 See Chapter 4: 'Varying Paths...', pp. 55–6
- 6 See the comparative essay by Elizabeth Picard, 'Arab Military in Politics: from Revolutionary Plot to Authoritarian State', in Giacomo Luciani (ed.), *The Arab State* (London: Routledge, 1990): 189–219. See also Roger Owen, *State...*, pp. 197–222.
- 7 General Chehab first assumed the presidency by interim in 1952 until the election of President Chamoun. He was encouraged by outgoing President Khoury, who still controlled the majority in the parliament, to run for the presidency, but Chehab declined. Moreover, Chehab sought to resign from office in 1960 but was urged to stay by many Lebanese politicians. A third gesture occurred when Chehab refused to seek the amendment of the constitution to allow his reelection for a second term, though he was encouraged to do so by his supporters who had a majority in the parliament. Finally, despite the urging of Chehabist deputies, Chehab refused to run for the presidential elections in 1970.
- 8 See Ayubi, *Over-Stating...*, pp. 256–88.
- 9 See Owen, *State...*, pp. 32–54.
- 10 See John Waterbury, *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat: The Political Economy of Two Regimes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983): 423–34.
- 11 On the importance of the public sector for state control, see Waterbury, *The Egypt...*, pp. 57–122 and pp. 241–6.
- 12 See Hazem Beblawi, 'The Rentier State in the Arab World', in Giacomo Luciani (ed.), *The Arab State*, pp. 85–98. See also G. Luciani, 'Allocation vs Production States: A Theoretical Framework', in Luciani (ed.), *Ibid.*, pp. 65–84.
- 13 See Hudson, *Arab Politics...*, pp. 165–229.
- 14 Nazih Ayubi, 'Arab Bureaucracies: Expanding Size, Changing Roles', in Luciani (ed.), *The Arab State...*, p. 147. See Ayubi, *Over-Stating...*, pp. 289–328.
- 15 See Roger Owen, *State...*, pp. 166–96.
- 16 See Sami Zubaida, *Islam, The People And the State* (London: Routledge, 1989): 121— 82.
- 17 See Fouad Ajami, 'In the Pharaoh's Shadow: Religion and Authority in Egypt' in James Piscatori, (ed.), *Islam in the Political Process*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983): 12–35. See also P. J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt From Muhammad Ali to Sadat* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980): 466.
- 18 See Ghassan Salamé, 'Political Power and the Saudi State', in Berch Berberoglu (ed.), *Power and Stability in the Middle East* (London: Zed Press, 1989): 70–89. See also Joseph Kostiner,

The Making of Saudi Arabia 1916–1936. From Chieftancy to Monarchial State (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Christine Moss Helms, *The Cohesion of Saudi Arabia, Evolution of Political Identity*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Safran, *Saudi Arabia...*

- 19 According to Almond and Powell, one of the four elements that constitute a political system is its 'symbolic capability', which they define as 'the rate of *effective* symbol flow from the political system into the society and the international community,' (p. 199). Almond and Powell, *Comparative Politics...*, pp. 190–212.
- 20 Owen, *State...*, p. 38.
- 21 Samir al-Khalil, *Republic of Fear: The Inside Story of Saddam's Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989): 4–45.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ben-Dor, *State and Conflict...*, pp. 238–9.

10

PLO Defiance of State Authority

Jordan Versus Lebanon

Lebanon, like Jordan, had to deal with the PLO in the aftermath of the 1967 war. The Jordanian-Palestinian confrontation is instructive: by knowing why Lebanese authorities failed to adopt a 'Jordanian solution to the PLO armed presence, one can examine the differences between the two cases.

Jordan, like Lebanon, had structural preconditions for conflict. The kingdom has had deep identity and legitimacy crises since it was established in the 1920s.¹ In many ways, Western interests and the imperatives of a stable regional balance of power have kept the kingdom afloat. If, for example, Lebanon is sometimes perceived as an artificial political construct – as are all post-World War I countries of the Arab East – Jordan was, in comparison, created from scratch.² Ironically, historical and political claims on Jordan brought together Palestinians and Israelis as well as other neighbouring Arab countries, though the content and timing of the revival of these claims have varied.

After 1967, and precisely in the aftermath of the celebrated Karama battle, Palestinians – then led by several guerrilla organisations – began to constitute a direct political and military challenge to the stability of the kingdom.³ Contrary to previous externally-generated crises, this time the Hashemite regime was threatened from within: by a Palestinian

revolutionary movement in a country where Jordanians of Palestinian origin and Palestinian refugees form the majority of the population and where the guerrillas were operating on a territory they knew well, and where Palestinian leaders were determined to change the situation by force.⁴

Not unlike Lebanese society, Jordanian society was easily penetrable, though for different reasons. In Jordan, the Palestinians were present in large numbers and occupied influential positions within the political and military establishments.⁵ This meant that a Palestinian nationalist consciousness could be easily revived whenever the political and organisational framework for that revival is provided. This was the role that the guerrilla groups played in Jordan by creating the political and military infrastructure for the revolution. By contrast, in Lebanon the political system allowed Palestinian penetration through the thin overlap of democratic openness and confessional divisions. These differences had opposite effects on the decision-making process in the two countries; while they facilitated gradual PLO take-over in Lebanon, they enabled Jordan to put an end to Palestinian defiance of the state.

What are the differences and similarities between the two cases? First comes the nature of the state. In Jordan, rule is personified in the king. The state was created following World War One as one of three Hashemite domains (the other two were Syria and Iraq) and today it is the last remaining one. On the contrary, the state in Lebanon does not serve the interest of a supreme ruler, nor that of a royal family. Apart from its function as a symbol of national unity, the state embodies rule by consensus, the violation of which would shake the foundation of the political system.

The obvious difference between the two countries has to do with the state's instrument of legitimate coercion: the armed forces. The Jordanian army is loyal to the king, whereas the Lebanese army is 'loyal' to a system of government – to the civilian leadership. This distinction is non-existent in Jordan. As a result, the state's monopoly over the instruments of coercion is little challenged in Jordan in comparison with Lebanon. In the name of the monarch, the Jordanian army can move decisively to suppress internal dissent.

The Lebanese army, by contrast, is responsive to divergent interests, which mirror various communal perceptions and concerns. It upholds state interests to the extent that the latter reflect national consensus, that is, agreement among Lebanon's confessional groups. In the absence of such consensus the army in Lebanon is more an institution that symbolises national unity and promotes national integration than an instrument of internal control.

Of great significance is the structure of the Jordanian army with its strong bedouin core whose loyalty to the king is immune to both Palestinian and Arab influences, all the more so since the bedouin interests in Jordan are inextricably linked to the survival of the kingdom itself.⁶ These types of loyalties are non-existent in Lebanon, where none of the communities depends for survival on the strength of its communal representation in the army, certainly in times of crisis linked to pan-Arab politics when the army is paralysed by the political leadership.

Another crucial difference between the two countries lies in the structure of their respective political systems. Jordan is a monarchy and Lebanon is a confessional democracy. Political life in Lebanon is free and open, whereas Jordan's is not. Lebanon's process of political balancing in decision-making is non-existent in Jordan, where final decisions, whether in domestic or foreign policies, are made by the king.

In Lebanon, however, veto power can be exercised within the executive and can paralyse the government process. Also, state action in Lebanon is confined to the accepted rules of checks and balances to preserve the democratic openness of the system. The government, therefore, cannot resort to actions that may jeopardise communal equilibrium. Consequently, it remains inactive. In Jordan, however, the imperatives of regime survival supersede all other domestic priorities and concerns.

Another difference between the two countries stems from the regional environment. While Jordan's political existence has always depended on developments linked to the evolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict whether before or after the 1948 war, Lebanon's political misfortunes became a function of Arab-Israeli politics only after the 1967 war. As a result, internal breakdown would have different repercussions in both countries both on inter-Arab politics and on the broader Arab-Israeli conflict. In Jordan, it

would lead to a drastic restructuring of regional alliances. A similar disruption of order in Lebanon, as was the case in the 1970s, would be less detrimental to regional stability.

The collapse of the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan would create a political and military vacuum which would be filled by neighbouring states: the two antagonistic Ba'thist regimes in Syria and Iraq and by Israel. Filling the vacuum in Jordan by any of these countries was a recipe for a regional war. This in turn would lead to American and possibly Soviet intervention. Indeed, it was concern over this kind of scenario that prompted Washington to act decisively in support of King Hussein in 1970. For Washington, the preservation of the monarchy was the least costly alternative when compared with the large scale destabilisation that would ensue as a result of the collapse of the Hashemite monarchy.⁷

The situation in Jordan in 1970 was particularly alarming, as it offered no intermediary alternative whereby the war would go on for sometime and would thus be institutionalised for a number of years along well-defined demarcation lines, as was the case in Lebanon. Unlike Lebanon's complex war mapping, where a large number of parties participated in the war and where objectives were in constant mutation, in Jordan there were only two parties to the conflict, and their objectives were well-defined.⁸ In other words, for military confrontations to end in Jordan, one party had to prevail over the other. While in Jordan there was one winner (the monarchy) and one loser (the Palestinians), in Lebanon no one group was in a position to achieve a clear-cut victory in the 1975–76 war.

In the mid-1970s, none of these considerations applied to Lebanon either at the level of regional politics or at the level of superpowers' policies and priorities in the post-1973 phase of the Arab-Israeli conflict. A breakdown of the state in Lebanon in the mid-1970s would invite intervention by Syria to stabilise Lebanon and to contain the PLO. In fact, Syrian overt military intervention in 1976 was regarded as a stabilising factor by Washington and Israel and received support.⁹

Another dissimilarity between the two countries concerns the timing of military confrontations with the PLO. Fighting PLO forces in 1969–70, at a time when Nasser was still the pre-eminent Arab leader and prior to the stepping up of commando operations inside Israel is one thing, and fighting

a fully-mobilised Palestinian revolutionary movement in the mid-1970s enjoying strong Arab support and wide international recognition is quite another. In the earlier period, it was still possible for an Arab ruler whose policies were in line with Nasser's to contain a defiant PLO. This was the case of King Hussein's pro-Nasser policy at the height of the Rogers Plan, which Nasser had accepted.¹⁰

A few years later, however, at the height of Palestinian political and military ascendancy, it became more difficult to curb the PLO. And, in the aftermath of the 1973 war, when Sadat opted for a different course of action towards Israel, Syria became the major Arab power capable of influencing Lebanese politics and checking the Palestinians in Lebanon. Lebanon had the unfortunate task of having to confront the PLO under a headless Arab order and in a rapidly changing power equation on the Arab-Israeli scene in the immediate aftermath of the 1973 war.

The difference in timing of the turmoil between Lebanon and Jordan was greatly significant in as far as American interests and priorities in the region were concerned. For Washington, the preservation of the Hashemite regime was a test of American credibility, as then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger explained.¹¹ In the early 1970s, the United States could not afford to lose a friendly regime in the region. In addition, American targets (the hijacking of American airline carriers and the capture of hostages) were at stake. In a curious way,' writes Kissinger, 'the future of the king and of the hostages had begun to merge.'¹² So did American and Israeli interests, which merged to keep the Hashemite regime afloat.

In Lebanon, by contrast, American calculations and objectives went in the opposite direction. A breakdown in the mid-1970s did not constitute a challenge to American credibility and was no threat to American security. Following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, Washington was in a far better strategic position in the region than a few years earlier. By then, the Soviets were gradually losing Egypt, and Washington was a more relaxed power now that the Vietnam war had been brought to an end. And there were no American targets at stake in Lebanon. Even more revealing was that in post-1975 Lebanon, Washington depended for the security of its embassy and other interests in West Beirut on Palestinian forces and co-operation with Fateh in intelligence matters.¹³

Two other developments facilitated Jordan's swift crackdown on the guerrillas. One was the power struggle in Syria, which peaked in 1970. Syria's internal factionalism left the military divided over the policy to adopt towards the crisis in Jordan, that is, whether to intervene on the side of the Palestinians or to remain neutral. The latter option was favoured by the Minister of Defence, Hafiz Asad, who refused to provide air cover for the invading Syrian army.¹⁴ Another development was the non-interventionist stand taken by the Iraqi regime even after military confrontations between Palestinian and Jordanian forces had started. Had the 17,000 Iraqi troops stationed in Jordan intervened in the fighting on the side of the Palestinian forces, as it was at first feared, they were in a position to tip the military balance in favour of the PLO and would have affected the final outcome.

Another difference between the two cases is the high level of Palestinian military, political and propaganda preparedness to face government authorities in Lebanon as opposed to Jordan. Following the loss of its Jordan base the PLO was a different organisation at all political, ideological and military levels. Not only was the PLO better equipped to deal with confrontations with the Lebanese authorities, it absorbed the lessons learned in Jordan and sought to entrench itself deeply in Lebanon in a more systematic and skilful way.

The Authoritarian State as a Safety Valve Both Lebanon and Jordan had to deal with an armed PLO. This constituted a security and political threat to government authorities in both countries. Both had internal problems and divided societies. Yet Jordan was capable of handling the Palestinian threat, while Lebanon failed. The fact that some Lebanese groups were supportive of the PLO does not account for the state's inability to control Palestinian armed presence, for not only did the Palestinians have grass

root support in Jordan, they also had significant presence within the government. And yet Jordan remained Hashemite. The determining factor, then, is the difference in the state's response to the challenge it faced: that is, Jordan's ability to resort to force to put an end to an expanding PLO.

While regional conditions prevailing in Lebanon in the 1970s were comparatively less favourable than in Jordan in 1970, the Lebanese army was militarily in a position to overrun PLO strongholds in the country, at least until 1973. It refrained from doing so for reasons pertaining to the paralysis of the decision-making process in times of crisis.¹⁵ Jordan's response to the PLO was possible mainly because the state had the 'inherent' advantage of being authoritarian. Lebanon, however, had the 'inherent' disadvantage of being non-authoritarian. This is the fundamental characteristic that sets Lebanon apart from other Arab countries.

Notes

- 1 On Jordan's modern historical development, see Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdallah, the Zionist Movement and the Partition of Palestine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdallah and the Making of Jordan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
- 2 See Fromkin, *A Peace...*, pp. 493–529.
- 3 See Fuad Jabber, 'The Palestinian Resistance and Inter-Arab Politics', in Quandt, Jabber, Lesch, (eds) *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973): 157–216. For a first-hand account of Palestinian guerrilla groups in Jordan, see Talal Salman, *Ma' Fath' wa al Fida'iiyin* (Beirut: Dar al-'Awda, 1969).
- 4 See Shafiq al-Hout, *Al-Filastini Bayn al-Te'h wa al-Dawla* (Beirut: n.p. 1977): 84–9.
- 5 See Yezid Sayigh, *Al-Urdun wa al-Filastiniyyun* (London: Riad El-Rayess Books, 1987).
- 6 See P. J. Vatikiotis, *Politics and the Military in Jordan* (London: Frank Cass, 1967).
- 7 On American policy towards the crisis in Jordan in 1970–71, see Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979): 594–631; William B. Quandt, *Decade of Decisions: American Policy Toward the Arab–Israeli Conflict, 1967–1976* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977): 105–27. See also William Quandt's comparative assessment of two crises involving American intervention, 'Case Studies: Lebanon 1958 and Jordan 1970', in Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan (eds), *The Use of Armed Forces as a Political Instrument* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1976), Chap. X, 1–60.
- 8 For a detailed account of the conflict in Jordan, see Randa Nasri Mukhar, 'A Study in Political Violence. The Jordanian Internal War of 1968–1971. M.A. Thesis. American University of Beirut, 1978.
- 9 See Yair Evron, *War and Intervention in Lebanon: The Israeli-Syrian Deterrence Dialogue* (London: Croom Helm, 1987): 19–59.
- 10 Quandt, *Decade of Decisions...*, pp. 72–104.
- 11 Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 596–7.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 604.
- 13 John K. Cooley, *Payback. America's Long War in the Middle East* (Washington: Brassey's (US), Inc., 1991): 84–5.
- 14 See Patrick Seale, *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988): 154–65.
- 15 See Chapter 15: *The Year of Living Dangerously*, 1973, pp. 203–17.

Part IV

The Post-1967 PLO and Lebanese Politics

Palestinian Presence in Lebanon until 1968

That Lebanon has historically been a refuge for a number of rejected and persecuted groups in the Middle East is neither a myth nor a political cliché.¹ Rather, it is reality rooted in the communal consciousness of many Lebanese. Over the centuries, historic and geographic imperatives made Mount Lebanon a last resort territory as conflicts and warfare drove minority groups from the interior to seek security and protection in Lebanon's rugged mountains.

Under the *Imara*, Mount Lebanon's territorial and communal space remained fluid; the traffic of people and armies in and around the Mountain continued with no major impediment. It was not until the mid-19th century that communal boundaries became clearly drawn at all territorial, political and sectarian levels. By then, the modern conception of Lebanon as a refuge for minorities began to take shape. The concrete manifestation of that was the establishment of the semiautonomous *Mutasarrifiyya* in 1861.

In addition to the two principal communities, the Maronites and the Druze, the Mountain was inhabited by several minority groups. While small groups of Shia and Sunni have always inhabited Mount Lebanon, it was mostly small Christian communities who sought refuge there beginning in the 18th century, particularly those who broke off with their original churches and joined the Roman Catholic Church. The tradition of refuge continued in the first half of the 20th century with the inflow of successive waves of Armenians fleeing massacres in Turkey in the First World War. This was also the case of other groups, such as the Kurds, the Chaldeans

and Assyrians of Iraq, who came to Lebanon, though in smaller numbers, in search of security and freedom.

The Palestinians in Lebanon: From Arab Refugees to National Revolutionaries Lebanon's doors were officially sealed following the entry of Palestinian refugees during the 1948 Arab–Israeli war. But contrary to those who had previously sought refuge in Lebanon, the Palestinians were not the victims of religious persecution or classic warfare; their dispersal was the result of a different source of victimisation: that of nationalism. Unlike other groups who came to Lebanon to escape the tyranny of empires, the Palestinians were displaced in the era of the nation-state, when the political and territorial space in the region was saturated.

Palestinians came to Lebanon at a time when differences within Lebanese society had reached a considerable degree of political maturity and when the confessional structure of Lebanese society had taken its present shape. In other words, there was little room for newcomers to Lebanon's communal and political landscape. To gain a foothold in the country, newcomers had to carve out a place of their own, but only at the expense of the existing communal and political structures. Initially, the Palestinians, who were the only group to seek refuge in Lebanon after 1943, were not the source of conflict. It was not until nearly two decades later that Palestinian military presence became destabilising.

In 34 years (1948–82), the Palestinian presence in Lebanon evolved in several phases, each reflecting the changing nature of the Arab–Israeli–Palestinian conflict. From 1948 to the 1975–76 war, four phases can be discerned. The first began with one defeat in 1948 and was ended with

another in 1967. The second phase (1968–71) witnessed the first major political and military encounter between Palestinian nationalism and an Arab regime. The PLO's defeat in Jordan in 1970–71 was, in many ways, the Palestinians' '1967 *Naksa*' (setback).

But in open and free-wheeling Lebanon the PLO was able to recover from the Jordan war. Lebanon, once again, was true to its 'last refuge' role, now for the Palestinian Resistance in its post-Jordan phase (1972–1975). By the mid-1970s, the PLO attained unprecedented power at all political, diplomatic and military levels. By then, confrontation between an expanding PLO and Lebanese groups became inevitable; it was only a matter of time before the explosion occurred. It did in April 1975, and it led to a bloody war which continued until the end of 1976. The 1975–76 war marked the fourth phase of Palestinian presence in Lebanon.

The final phase extending from 1977 to 1982² was characterised by further marginalisation of the Lebanese state. The PLO emerged as the principal beneficiary after the 1975–76 war. A massive Israeli invasion in 1982 dismantled PLO strongholds in Lebanon. Ironically, it was Israel that ultimately dictated the path the Palestinians took in and out of Lebanon: first by evicting them from Palestine in 1948, and then by routing their political and military leadership out of Lebanon nearly three decades later.

While the Palestinians were present in various capacities in a number of Arab countries, it was in Lebanon where Palestinian society underwent a transformation from defenceless 'Arab refugees' in the late 1940s to revolutionaries in the name of Palestinian nationalism after 1967.³

The Palestinian Problem in its Pan-Arab Years The obvious question that comes to mind in relation to the Palestinian–Israeli dimension of the conflict concerns the origins of the problem. What concerns us here is not the debate over the origins of the conflict but its repercussions on Arab–Israeli politics since 1948. For to engage in the long historical realm of the Palestine

question⁴ would take us back several centuries – to biblical times and even before.

The events that took place in Palestine prior to 1948 were not linked to the formation of the Lebanese state nor to the country's internal and external politics. Developments within British mandate Palestine, especially at the height of Palestinian-Zionist confrontations in the mid-1930s, were of no direct relevance to Lebanese politics under the French mandate.

But what brought the Palestine problem closer to Lebanon were developments that occurred after 1948. While the 1948 war drove Palestinian refugees into Lebanon, it was events occurring outside Lebanon that helped shape the nature of the post-1948 Palestinian dimension of the problem and, consequently, the PLO armed presence in Lebanon. At the root of these changes were two Arab-Israeli wars (1967 and 1973) and the Palestinian–Jordanian war in 1970–71.

With that in mind, we can now examine the various phases of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon as outlined earlier. In 1948, the Palestinians were the victims of the first corporate Arab debacle (*al-Nakba*). The majority of Palestinians who entered Lebanon in 1948 came from northern Palestine, and numbered around 120,000.⁵ They were settled in a number of camps located near major coastal cities, and were assisted by relief organisations. At that time, many Arabs, including Palestinians, regarded the 1948 war as a temporary setback. It was believed that the creation of Israel was an act of Western imperialism, which could be reversed. In Arab eyes, defeat was attributed to the lack of military preparedness and coordination on the part of Arab armies. Lebanon, which took part in the 1948 war, accepted the Palestinian refugees as an expression of solidarity with the Arab position.⁶ It was also an act of internal political balancing in line with Lebanon's 'Arab face', as embodied in the 1943 National Pact.⁷

Leaderless, divided and dispersed, the bulk of the Palestinian population was, until the early 1960s, passive politically. While many Palestinians in Lebanon lived in refugee camps, others took active part in the economic and intellectual life of the country. It was not until the emergence of Nasser's militant platform that the Palestinians, like most Arabs, were

drawn into ideological pan-Arab politics. Palestinian political activists, particularly those who were exposed to Beirut's diverse political circles, were active in Arab nationalist parties, notably the Ba'th Party, or sought to establish political movements of their own. Among those was a small group of Palestinian students attending the American University of Beirut at the time of the 1948 war, notably George Habash and Wadih Haddad.⁸ Other young activists joined the Syrian Social Nationalist Party.⁹

Two concerns preoccupied these young men, traumatised by the 1948 defeat: to organise in order to fight back and expel the Zionists from Palestine and to punish 'the generation of defeat' (*jil al-hazima*), those leaders responsible for the loss of Palestine. For them, Arab leaders, including Palestinian leaders in pre-1948 Palestine, had 'betrayed the cause' and thereby ought to be punished for their deeds.¹⁰ And since existing political movements lacked either the militant appeal (the Ba'th Party) or the ideological appeal (the SSNP), another alternative had to be found. That was, in short, the vision of George Habash and other Palestinians of his generation in the immediate aftermath of the 1948 war. But it was not until nearly a decade later that Habash and his companions formulated a political platform and established the Arab Nationalist Movement.¹¹

In the early 1960s, a group of Palestinian activists became more visible. These included Yasir Arafat (Abu 'Ammar) and his associates – Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad), Faruq al-Qaddumi (Abu al-Lutf), Khalid al-Hassan and others – the founders of Fateh and its leading figures after 1967. Clandestine and militant, Fateh came to embody Palestinian national aspirations more than any other Palestinian group. Its Beirut-based organ, *Filastinuna*, reflected its 'ideology', which was neither Arab nationalist, nor Nasserite, nor Ba'thist.¹² For Fateh leaders, the 'ideology' was Palestinian nationalism and the objective was the liberation of Palestine by armed struggle. As Abu Jihad explained in 1961: 'Palestine was ours and the enemy took it by rape and force, and we must take it back using the same means.'¹³

To achieve this objective, no means would be spared. One such means was the notion of *tawrit*. This meant implicating Arab regimes in the struggle against Israel by driving them to engage in military confrontations with Israel and to open up their borders to guerrilla warfare.¹⁴ The policy of

tawrit came to constitute the core of Fateh strategy after 1967 and it acquired an ideological dimension influenced by Third World liberation movements.¹⁵

The ideological scope of Palestinian activists in the 1950s and early 1960s centred on the Nasserite and, to a lesser extent, on the Ba'thist platform of pan-Arabism. The liberation of Palestine, it was argued, could come only through a radical transformation of Arab society in the hope of achieving the objective of a united Arab nation.¹⁶ The first major setback came with the collapse of the three-year union (1958–61) between Syria and Egypt – an early warning signal for Arab nationalists, including Palestinians, that the objective of Arab unity was not easily attainable.

The other major development affecting the course of Palestinian politics was Israel's diversion of the Jordan river and the subsequent Arab response to that action. For this purpose, an Arab summit meeting was convened in Cairo in January 1964 at the invitation of Nasser. In addition to devising plans to counteract Israeli action, the meeting resulted in the formation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and its military arm, the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA). The PLO was dominated by Palestinian notables, particularly Ahmad al-Shuqairi who, after having served as representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations, was now Nasser's nominee for PLO leadership.¹⁷ Shuqairi and his associates were traditional politicians willing to accommodate the interests of Arab patrons. Shuqairi was discredited by the 1967 defeat and the PLO was taken over by guerrilla organisations in 1968.

It took a crushing defeat of the magnitude of 1967 to make Arab regimes realise that Israel could not be defeated by mere rhetoric. The six-day war was a shattering blow to time-honoured beliefs in Arab power under Nasser's leadership.¹⁸ The Palestinians were the first to give up on the pre-1967 pattern of pan-Arab politics. Those who stood to benefit from Arab failure in 1967 were the post-1948 generation of Palestinian nationalists who, until then, were either unknown, or were not a centre-stage under the Shuqairi-led PLO.

While Nasser continued to be at the helm of Arab leadership until his death in 1970, the Arab world was in search of new heroes. The yearning and impatience to break the deadlock made Palestinian and Arab public

opinion willing to give allegiance to a new breed of leaders. Any act of defiance of Israel was hailed as a major victory. This was clearly reflected in the Arab reaction to the Karama battle in March 1968.¹⁹ This was the kind of achievement the Arab public was eager to see to regain self-confidence and to declare in unison: 'we are all Fedayin'. This event elevated the guerrillas to unprecedented heights of credibility and prestige.

The PLO underwent substantial transformation both in words and deeds. Fateh was the ultimate beneficiary of the Karama battle. As Hisham Sharabi explained, 'it was probably the capacity to move so surely after Karama from the military (guerrilla) to the political (organisational) sphere that enabled [Fateh] to establish itself firmly as the leading guerrilla organisation and the rallying point of the Palestinian Resistance'.²⁰ A few months later, Arafat was in control of the PLO. He was now in a stronger position vis-à-vis Arab leaders – a position which no Palestinian leader had enjoyed since 1948. The PLO was also in a position to lay claim to Arab resources in the name of a cause, which all Arab regimes sought to embrace for a variety of political and ideological reasons. By 1969, Sharabi wrote, 'The Palestinians no longer saw themselves, and were no longer seen by others, as mere refugees; this involved a psychological transformation of wide practical consequences: a truly revolutionary spirit had swept over the younger Arab generation and the guerrillas seized the initiative.'²¹

The Guerrillas in Lebanon: 1967–68

Prior to 1967 Lebanon was marginally involved in Arab-Israeli politics. In 1957 an attempt was made to transfer Palestinian camps located near major cities (Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon). Opposed by Muslim leaders, the plan, drawn by Brigadier François Génadry, was abandoned.²²

Following the establishment of the PLO in 1964, Arab countries agreed that no PLO military bases would be established in Lebanon, and that Palestinians residing in Lebanon who joined the Palestine Liberation Army would not be allowed to return to Lebanon.²³ This policy was approved by all Arab states on the grounds that Lebanon had a delicate domestic political structure, and thus was not able to accommodate Palestinian military operations.²⁴ At that time, Lebanese authorities allowed the establishment of a training base near the residence of PLO leader Ahmad al-Shuqairi in

the village of Kayfun.²⁵ The guerrillas were confined to the base and were under strict supervision by Lebanese military authorities.

Although weak and largely marginal to Palestinian and Arab politics, Fateh began to organise in Lebanon, just as it did in other Arab countries, particularly in countries where there was a large refugee population. Beginning in 1965, Fateh began to establish secret cells in Lebanon. Its military arm, al-'Assifa, was assisted by Syria and Algeria. It carried out occasional raids against Israel, but these raids were of little military consequence.²⁶ Its activities were confined at first to five Palestinian camps: Rashidiyeh and 'Ayn al-Helweh in the south, Borj al-Barajneh and Tal-Za'tar near Beirut, and Nahr al-Barid in the north.²⁷ In mid-1966, Fateh established its first Lebanon regional command in the Tal Za'tar camp under the command of Raji al-Najmi.²⁸ And in 1967 it established secret training bases in Rashidiyeh, 'Ayn al-Helweh, Tal-Za'tar and Borj al-Barajneh camps, run by Palestinian officers who served in the Syrian and Egyptian armed forces.²⁹

The first signs of the new-found Palestinian power first appeared in April 1968, when the funeral procession of a Lebanese Feda'i, Khalil al-Jamal, who died in Jordan, turned into a massive show of support for the Fedayin action (*al-'amal Feda'i*).³⁰ Jamal's funeral, attended by Premier 'Abdallah al-Yafi and Kataeb Party leader Pierre Gemayel, was an expression of solidarity for the Palestinian cause. Preparations were made by the government for the occasion. Schools were closed and the cortege was stopped in several villages on its way to Beirut, notably in the Maronite village of Kakhaleh 'to honour the martyr who died for a noble cause'.³¹ Indeed, there was a great deal of support and admiration for the Fedayin shared by Christians and Muslims alike. For Palestinian leaders, the death of a Lebanese Feda'i in the struggle to liberate Palestine confirmed 'the common destiny that unite Lebanese and Palestinian masses'.

The Jamal affair provided a strong political opening for the guerrillas in Lebanon. Committees were formed to collect money for al-'Assifa. Leading politicians were active in these committees, Rashid Karame in Tripoli and Nazih al-Bizri in Sidon.³² But the novel development was the joining of hundreds of Lebanese youth with the guerrillas. In May 1968, two to three hundred young men, who were mostly Muslim students, went to Syria

where they were trained by Syrian, Algerian and Palestinian officers in the Yarmouk camp near Damascus, and in barracks in Homs and Latakia.³³ They were sent later to Jordan to take part in military operations against Israel.

Beginning in 1968, mobilisation in support of the guerrillas became increasingly public and was better organised. Some groups called upon the Lebanese government to organise the military mobilisation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.³⁴ Sunni Mufti of Mount Lebanon, Mohammad 'Ali al-Juzu, formed a committee to collect funds for the guerrillas.³⁵ In August 1968, Shia cleric Ja'far alSadik received a Fatwa from Najaf in Iraq authorising Feda'i action against Israel.³⁶

The participation of Lebanese individuals in the war effort against Israel from Jordanian territory did not constitute a threat to Lebanon's stability and security. But what did constitute a threat were Palestinian guerrillas conducting raids against Israel from Lebanese territory.

One of those involved in these raids was Jalal Ka'wash, a Palestinian from the 'Ayn al-Helweh camp near Sidon and a member of al-'Assifa.³⁷ Ka'wash was detained by Lebanese security forces in December 1965. Although denied by Lebanese authorities, he was tortured and died in detention. Kept secret at first, the Ka'wash affair was disclosed by the Damascus-based al-'Assifa.³⁸ Occurring before 1967, the incident was of little political significance. But it was indicative of the kinds of problems that were to beset Lebanese politics in future years. It also marked the first direct confrontation between Lebanese military authorities and the guerrillas attacking Israel from Lebanon with Syrian support. The incident was widely exploited by Damascus, whose press attacked Lebanese government officials.³⁹

In summer 1968 an increasing number of guerrillas began to infiltrate from Syrian territory into the 'Arqub region in the south.⁴⁰ Clashes took place between the Lebanese Army and the guerrillas and between the latter and Israel.⁴¹ The first significant PLO attack on Israel from Lebanon occurred on 14 June 1968.⁴² On October 30, Israel carried out its first raid inside Lebanon targeting a Fateh encampment.⁴³ The problem now was not only how to stop guerrilla infiltrations, but also how to deal with the

mobilisation of thousands of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. After 1967, every refugee was a potential guerrilla.

The PLO had come a long way from the days of obscurity and inconsequential presence prior to 1967 to the leading pace-setter of Beirut's 'revolutionary' panArab politics in the late 1960s.⁴⁴ One could not but recall that in 1965, Yasir Arafat and several of his companions were detained by Lebanese authorities without anyone noticing the event, let alone objecting to it.⁴⁵ Four years later, Arafat signed the Cairo Agreement with the Lebanese government, which allowed the guerrillas freedom of military action in Lebanon. How did this come about? This is explored in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 The notion of 'Asile du Liban', advanced by historian Henri Lammens in his book *La Syrie: Precis Historique* (1921), was challenged by Salibi, *A House...*, pp. 130–50. See also review of Salibi's work, Farid el Khazen, Review Essay, *The Beirut Review* I (Spring 1991): 102–14.
- 2 This period is not covered in the book.
- 3 See Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Press, 1979).
- 4 See Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Times Books, 1980) 5 Data on Palestinian refugees differ among sources. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) figure for 1950 was 110, 000. A Palestinian source in 1950 put the figure at 140,000. According to official Lebanese sources, the number of refugees before 1952 was 140, 000. On these different estimates, see the survey by Leila al-Horr, *Al-Filastiniyyun fi Lubnan: Nazra lqtisadiyya wa Ijtima'iyya*, Malaf al-Nahar, vol. I, 27 June 1970: 5–12. See also *al-Diyar*, Special Report on the Palestinian Presence in Lebanon since 1948, 25–28 September 1995. On the exodus of Palestinians from the Galilee in 1948, see e.g. Nafez Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948* (Beirut: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1978); Benny Morris, 'The Causes and Character of the Arab Exodus: The Israeli Defence Forces Intelligence Branch Analysis of June 1948', *Middle Eastern Studies* 8 (January 1986): 5–19.
- 6 See Nasri Antoine Diab, *L'Année du Destin 1948: Le Liban et Israel Face à Face* (Beirut: Editions FMA, 1993): 133–262.
- 7 While this was the apparent political justification for the entry of Palestinian refugees in 1948, this issue has not yet been fully explored. According to Lebanese journalist Edouard Sa'b, who quotes Syrian leader Akram al-Hourani, the settlement of a large number of Palestinians in 1949 in Lebanon rather than in Syria was part of a British 'diabolic plan to destabilise Lebanon's confessional structure and force Lebanon into British-sponsored regional schemes (the Fertile Crescent or the Greater Syria scheme). Cited in René Chamussy, *Chronique d'une Guerre. Le Liban, 1975–1977* (Paris: Desclés, 1978): 21.
- 8 On George Habash's early political activities while at the AUB, see Fuad Mattar, *Hakim al-Thawra, Qissat Hayat al-Ductur George Habash* (London: High Light Publications, 1984): 16–35. See also al-Horr, *al-Filastiniyyun...*, pp. 5–9, and pp. 11–17.
- 9 See the revealing personal account of Hisham Sharabi, *Al-Jamr wa al-Ramad* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1978): 70–91.
- 10 Mattar, *Hakim al Thawra...*, p. 24.
- 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 38–67.
- 12 See Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization: People, Power and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984): 21–35. See also Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity...*, pp. 1–36.
- 13 Shafiq al-Hout, *'Ushruna 'Aman fi Munazamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyya. Ahadith alZukrayat, 1964–1984* (Beirut: Dar al-Istiqlal Lildirasat wa al-Nashr, 1989): 82.
- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 82–3.
- 15 Interview with Walid Khalidi, 10 February 1995.
- 16 See al-Hout, *Al-Filastini...*, pp. 39–66. Interview with Shafiq al-Hout. Beirut, 14 August 1994.

- 17 See Moshe Shemesh, 'The Founding of the PLO, 1964', *Middle Eastern Studies* 20 (October 1984): 105–41.
- 18 Ajami, 'The End of Pan-Arabism', pp. 355–73.
- 19 See Abu Iyad's account of the new Arab opening towards the PLO as a result of the Karama battle. Abu Iyad, *My Home...*, pp. 57–65. See also, Al-Hout, *Al-Filastini...*, pp. 67–104.
- 20 Sharabi, *Palestine Guerrillas...*, p. 32.
- 21 Hisham Sharabi, *Palestine and Israel: The Lethal Dilemma* (New York: Pegasus, 1969): 209.
- 22 Charles Helou, *Mémoires: Presence Palestinienne et Accord du Caire*, vol. II (Beirut: Librairie Antoine, n.d.): 88–9. Quoted from the Beirut daily *Le Réveil*, 27 May 1985.
- 23 Fouad Lahoud, *Ma'sat Jaysh Lubnan* (Beirut: n.p., 1977): 35.
- 24 This was in reference to the 1958 crisis, Lahoud, *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- 25 Salibi, *Crossroads...*, pp. 34–5; Lahoud, *Ma'sat...*, p. 36. According to Faisal al-Husseini, in June 1967 about 1200 persons were undergoing military training in the Kayfun base. Interview in *Mulhaq al-Nahar*, 21 December 1996, p. 4.
- 26 On that period, see Fuad Jabber in William B. Quandt, et al., *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973): 168–73. See also Abu Iyad, *My Home...*, pp. 29–49.
- 27 Interview with a former Fateh activist who wanted to remain unnamed, 28 June 1994.
- 28 *Ibid.* Fateh military command in 1966 included Abu Hassan, Abu al-Fateh, Yusif alKayed and Ahmad Abdul-Karim.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 Rex Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990): 47.
- 31 Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, pp. 120–3. It was rumoured that the coffin contained stones and not Jamal's body. See Sami al-Khatib, *al-Wasat*, 19 December 1994, p. 37.
- 32 Charles Helou, *Mémoires, Accord du Caire: Documents*, vol. III (Beirut: Librairie Antoine, n.d.): 53–4. Confidential report prepared by the Sûreté Générale, No. 180, 17 May 1968.
- 33 *Ibid.*, pp. 53–4. They came mostly from Sidon, Tripoli, Iqlim al-Kharrub and Beirut.
- 34 Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, pp. 124–5.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 126.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 133
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 133. Waddah Sharara, *Al-Silm al-Ahli al-Barid: Lubnan al-Mujtama'a wa alDawla, 1964–1967*, Part I (Beirut: Ma'ahad al-Inma' al-'Arabi, 1980): 227–8.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 228. See also Helou, vol. III, *Mémoires...*, pp. 41–5. Ka'wash's brother was an officer in the Ba'thist national guard in Syria, *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- 39 *Ibid.*, pp. 42–5.
- 40 *Ibid.*, pp. 46–8. Secret report prepared by the Sûreté Générale, No.697, 11 July 1968.
- 41 Clashes took place especially in May, June and October 1968. Israeli raids intensified in October. See Helou, *Ibid.*, p. 297.
- 42 Avner Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security. Politics, Strategy, and the Israeli Experience in Lebanon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987): 42.
- 43 *Ibid.*, pp. 42–3.

- 44 The PLO office in Beirut gained 'diplomatic' immunity in Lebanon in January 1966. Sharara, *Al-Silm...*, p. 228.
- 45 Arafat and a group of Fedayin were arrested by Lebanese authorities as they attempted to carry out a commando operation inside Israel across Lebanese borders. Abu Iyad, *My Home...*, p. 47. Also interview with Sami al-Khatib, Beirut, 21 March 1995. Moreover, in May 1966, Arafat and 11 of his companions, including Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad) were jailed by Syrian authorities for 40 days in connection with the murder of a pro-Syrian Palestinian officer, Yusif 'Urabi. See Ehud Yaari, *Strike Terror: The Story of Fateh* (New York: Sabra Books, 1970): 86–90. See also Ze'ev Schiff and Raphael Rothstein (eds), *Fedayin, the Story of the Palestinian Guerrilla* (London: Valentine, Mitchell, 1972): 56–92.

12

The Making of the Cairo Agreement

Prelude to the Cairo Agreement Beginning in 1968, PLO raids against Israel from southern Lebanon and commando operations originating from Lebanon gave Israel the pretext to retaliate against civilian and military targets in the country. The first such operation occurred on 28 December 1968 when airborne Israeli commandos landed at Beirut's international airport blew up 13 Lebanese civilian airplanes and returned safely to Israel. This swift operation, which lasted 40 minutes, was carried out in retaliation for a Palestinian commando attack on an Israeli airliner in Athens airport, the responsibility for which was claimed from Beirut by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.¹ The two Palestinian commandos who conducted the raid had refugee status² in Lebanon and had come to Athens from Beirut on board a French airliner.

Israel's response was intended as a strong warning to Lebanese authorities to exercise greater control over PLO guerrillas, one that would deter them from using Lebanon as a base for military activities.³ The Israeli raid was a gross violation of international law and of the sovereignty of a country hardly responsible for any of Israel's wars with Arab countries.⁴ Israel's action, however, was not cost-free. French President Charles de Gaulle, who had a special concern for Lebanon, responded to Israel's defiant behaviour by imposing an embargo on the sale of 50 Mirage fighter jets and spare parts paid for by Israel. At that time, France was one of Israel's major suppliers of sophisticated weapons, especially for its air force.

The raid had grave repercussions on internal Lebanese politics and, by implication, on Palestinian-Lebanese relations. Following the raid, demonstrations in support of Fedayin were held in a number of Lebanese cities. A few days later the newly-formed cabinet of Prime Minister 'Abdallah al-Yafi resigned and Yafi declared his unconditional support for the guerrillas adding that 'I am the first Feda'i'.⁵

This devastating raid left the country in a state of shock. It was the first Israeli operation against a non-military target inside Lebanon and the first of a series of spectacular and daring raids by Israel. A government commission, headed by former Prime Minister Hussein al-'Uwayni, was established to investigate the failure of the military authorities to attend to the country's national security.

In reality, however, Lebanese leaders, including those who were openly critical of the government's handling of the incident, realised that little could have been done to prevent such an unprecedented attack. It would not only have been difficult to uncover such a meticulously planned operation; a raid on this scale against a civilian target was inconceivable, especially since at the time the major Palestinian organisations were based in Jordan and were not conducting systematic raids from Lebanon. According to Raymond Eddé, the cabinet became aware of the Fedayin presence in Lebanon after the airport raid; there were no more than a few hundred of them, and they had not yet established training bases in the country.⁶

Apart from the message that Israel wanted to drive home to the Lebanese government to tighten control over PLO guerrillas, Israel probably chose to retaliate against Lebanon because it was a comparatively risk-free target.

Lebanese armed forces, unlike their Arab counterparts, were not permanently mobilised, for Lebanon was not in a state of war with Israel. Therefore, the military risks of an operation inside Lebanon were minimal in comparison with similar raids in other Arab countries.

The raid's immediate destabilising effects on Lebanon were contained because it occurred prior to the period of mass Palestinian politics in Lebanon which began in mid-1969. Two weeks later a new cabinet, headed by Rashid Karamé, was formed. Now a new dimension was added to the political debate: the nature and scope of the Palestinian military presence in Lebanon. Never before had political differences in Lebanon involved an issue as complicated and polarising as the question of the armed presence of the Palestinian Resistance Movement. Lebanon had to grapple with a novel problem, the solution to which was far beyond Lebanon's political resources and military capabilities. Almost overnight, 'Lebanon,' noted Ghassan Tuéni, 'entered the 1967 war, but through the backdoor.'⁷

‘The April 23 Uprising’

Beginning in 1968 guerrilla infiltrations from Syria into the 'Arqub region in south Lebanon and confrontations between infiltrators and the Lebanese army became increasingly frequent. One such confrontation took place on 29 October 1968 in the village of Hilta in 'Arqub resulting in the killing of one Feda'i and the injury of two others.⁸

Following this clash a meeting was held on 16 November to discuss the matter. The meeting included Lebanese Army Commander Emile Boustany, Chief of Staff Yusif Shmayet, Intelligence Chief Gaby Lahoud and representatives of Palestinian organisations.⁹ Palestinian officials stated that their intention was to attack targets in Israel and that to achieve this they needed to pass through Lebanese territory.¹⁰ To that Boustany replied that Lebanon would not allow such infiltrations. He then stated the Lebanese position on such military activities and stressed the following.¹¹ (i) Lebanon signed an armistice agreement with Israel in 1949; it was still in effect and Lebanon could not violate it; (ii) Military operations between Israel and the Arab countries are part of military strategy under the United Arab Command. Lebanon cannot allow turmoil on the Lebanese–Israeli border without co-ordination with that military body; and (iii) Attacks carried out

by the Fedayin from Lebanon would lead to violent Israeli retaliations against civilians in Lebanese villages. This exchange was then conveyed to President Helou and Prime Minister Yafi.¹²

A few months later, on 15 April 1969, fighting broke out between the Lebanese Army and infiltrating guerrillas in the southern village of Deir Mimas. Disturbances were also recorded in several Palestinian camps. Four days later, another clash took place between army troops and armed Palestinians in the villages of 'Odeiseh and Khiyam, resulting in several casualties.¹³ Demonstrations also took place in Beirut and in other major cities. On 22 April clashes were renewed in the south in which several guerrillas were injured and others detained.¹⁴ Clashes became recurrent as the number of guerrillas operating in Lebanon increased. According to Lebanese security sources, the number of guerrillas based in the south by mid-1969 was approximately 4000.¹⁵ The majority belonged to Sa'iqa and Fateh.

The more serious clash, however, took place not in remote areas near the Lebanese-Israeli border but in Sidon and Beirut. No sooner had the country recovered from the Israeli raid than it found itself engulfed, in April 1969, in a crisis over the Palestinian problem in its Arab and Lebanese dimensions – as opposed to the more predictable Israeli dimension.

The occasion for turmoil was a demonstration called for by several Lebanese Leftist and Arab nationalist parties to protest against 'the reactionary policies of the Lebanese government towards Fedayin action' and to call for 'the opening of southern borders for guerrilla operations against Israel'.¹⁶ On the surface, the demonstration looked like yet another episode of arm twisting between government authorities and pro-Palestinian groups. In reality, however, what happened on 23 April 1969 was a Fateh-instigated confrontation with the Lebanese government. Such a confrontation would provoke a crisis which, in turn, would bring the issue of PLO armed presence into the open.¹⁷

Confrontations with government authorities were part of a Fateh strategy to establish a permanent military presence in Lebanon. According to George Hawi, Arafat was uncertain about the precarious state of affairs that prevailed in Jordan in 1969 as well as about the PLO's ability to take over, as advocated by some Palestinian leaders.¹⁸ He did not think that 'dual

authority' (*izdiwajiyat al-sulta*) in Jordan was viable in the long-run.¹⁹ New alternatives had to be explored. One such alternative was to strengthen Fateh's presence in Lebanon and create new realities on the ground', especially since the situation seemed favourable both inside the camps and in the growing popular support for the PLO.²⁰ Arafat saw Lebanon as an important arena (*saha*) for confrontation.²¹ These issues were discussed in early April 1969 in Amman between Arafat and a delegation of the Lebanese Communist Party which included George Hawi, George Batal and 'Ali 'Abd.²²

In fact, since 1965 Fateh had been active in Lebanon building a military infrastructure and a network of supporters. One such group was the Movement of Support for Fateh (Harakat Musanadat Fateh).²³ In the late 1960s it was time to expand and to alter the nature of the political and military Palestinian presence in Lebanon. Within this context, a decision was made to prepare for a large demonstration in Beirut. For that purpose a committee was formed (the Committee for the Support of Fateh, 'Lajnat Nasrat Fateh') to plan for the demonstration.²⁴ Those in charge were a Fateh representative in Lebanon named Hamdan and Toufiq alSafadi.²⁵

Meetings held to prepare for the demonstration were attended by representatives of the Lebanese Communist Party, the Organisation of Socialist Lebanon, the pro-Iraqi Ba'th Party, the Progressive Socialist Party and other smaller Leftist and pro-Fateh groupings in addition to representatives of student organisations, notably from Beirut Arab University.²⁶ While Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party was represented in the meetings by Mohsin Dalloul and Khalil Ahmad Khalil, Jumblatt was not in favour of the demonstration.²⁷ In their last meeting held in the locality of Ras al-Nab' in Beirut, participants agreed to call for the demonstration in the afternoon of 23 April in the area of Horsh.²⁸ Mobilisation of supporters to take part in the demonstration centred on Palestinians living in the refugee camps and on university and high school students in various parts of Beirut.²⁹

A few days prior to 23 April, Fateh official Hamdan met with Prime Minister Karame. His attempt to gain government authorisation for the demonstration failed.³⁰ But that did not deter the organisers from going ahead with the demonstration on the specified date. Not only did the

demonstration take place in defiance of a government ban issued in a communiqué on 21 April, the parties involved, with the exception of the Progressive Socialist Party, were illegal in 1969 (they were legalised in 1970). Acting on the assumption that the demonstration would be called off, as he was led to believe by Jumblatt, Minister of the Interior Adel Osseiran was not willing to tolerate defiance of law and order, all the more so since the government did not authorise the demonstration or any other public gathering.³¹

Disturbances were not confined to Beirut. In Sidon, armed demonstrators coming from 'Ayn al-Helweh camp stormed the municipality building in the city and clashed with security forces.³² In Beirut, the clash started in the Barbir area as demonstrators tried to force their way through internal security forces deployed on the scene. According to a Leftist activist who took part in the demonstration, shooting started when a man in his early twenties in sportswear walked towards the front row of the demonstration, about fifteen minutes after it started, and opened fire at the security forces.³³ He then ran away as the security forces started shooting. In the process, two people were killed and many others were injured.³⁴ While the identity of the *agent provocateur* was not known, it was clear that the intention was to provoke turmoil. Clearly, the demonstration and the bloody confrontations that followed in Beirut, Sidon, Tripoli and the Beqa were not an accidental show of force. Clashes resulted in 11 people dead, including five Lebanese security forces and more than 80 injured.³⁵

What made the demonstration qualitatively different was its political significance. It signalled, in the words of Mohsin Ibrahim, 'the decision to open the battle' with the Lebanese government.³⁶ Equally important was that it was viewed by the Left in Lebanon as a revolutionary event of unprecedented importance. For Lebanese Communist Party ideologue Mahdi 'Amil, the April 23 uprising ('Intifada') was a political and ideological achievement of 'historic significance'.³⁷ With it, 'Lebanon's class struggle began' and a new political force was born 'to break the hold of the bourgeoisie-controlled' political system and 'to protect the Palestinian Resistance'.³⁸

Destabilisation in 1969 suited most Palestinian organisations and Leftist parties. Any change in the status quo served their interests. With little to

lose, a political crisis linked to the guerrillas and involving violence was a breakthrough for the PLO and its supporters in Lebanon. The crisis that began on 23 April went on for several months. It brought political and military benefits even more than its instigators had anticipated.

Reacting to these events, the government imposed a four-day nation-wide curfew. Several demonstrators were detained, including pro-Iraq Ba'th Party leader Abdul-Majid al-Rafi'. On 24 April, Karame resigned and the search for ways to end the crisis began. It was to continue for the next seven months until a formula of 'coexistence' between the Lebanese state and the Palestinian revolution was found. That formula was the Cairo Agreement.

Karame's hasty resignation, one day after the demonstration, was criticised by many politicians, including Kamal Jumblatt.³⁹ Attempts to dissuade Karame from resigning failed. He then accepted to act as head of a caretaker cabinet. For Karame, the crisis reflected that 'there was no internal agreement on fundamental issues'.⁴⁰ By this he meant the lack of agreement regarding the government position on the nature and scope of the Palestinian military presence. According to *al-Nahar* columnist Michel Abu Jawdeh, what was needed was 'a policy of national unity' rather than 'a government of national unity'.⁴¹

Opinions concerning the Fedayin diverged. Muslim leaders, notably Sa'eb Salam, 'Abdallah al-Yafi, and particularly Sunni Mufti Hassan Khalid, supported the 'freedom of Feda'i action' and called for the 'protection of the Palestinian Revolution'.⁴² Christian leaders, for their part, argued that guerrilla operations were detrimental to Lebanese interests and would lead to Israeli attacks. These were the views of Pierre Gemayel, Raymond Eddé and Maronite Patriarch Méouchy.⁴³ As for Jumblatt's position, it changed from opposing the demonstration to supporting Karame and the PLO.⁴⁴

The April clashes came at a time when the Arafat-led PLO was trying to make its presence felt in the Arab world. In that, the PLO was the de facto new rival of Nasser. The years 1969–70 were a transitional period symbolising 'The crossing from Nasserism to the Palestinian revolution'.⁴⁵

If Israel's raid in December 1968 came as a surprise to most Lebanese the April clashes were less surprising. Military confrontations between the guerrillas and government forces were bound to occur, just as they did in Jordan, where they were first recorded in Amman in November 1968.⁴⁶ The

late 1960s were a 'growth period' for the guerrillas in Lebanon: a period of rapid expansion and massive mobilisation of the refugee population throughout the country.⁴⁷

The intensity and scope of conflict were in part a function of the power equation between the various Palestinian organisations. The post-1967 PLO was dominated by two major political orientations: Arafat's Fateh organisation and several other smaller organisations linked to radical Arab regimes, particularly Syria, Iraq and Libya.⁴⁸ While the balance of power within the Palestinian Resistance fluctuated among guerrilla organisations, Fateh was the most dominant group. In Lebanon, as in Jordan until 1971, though not in Syria, Fateh was the Palestinian organisation that set the pace of war and peace with government authorities. While other Palestinian groups were in a position to instigate conflict, it was Fateh's role that really made a difference. Another active Palestinian group in Lebanon in the late 1960s was the Syrian-sponsored al-Sa'iqa (the military wing of the Vanguard of the Popular Liberation War). Other guerrilla organisations, such as George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Nayif Hawatmeh's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and other smaller groups, challenged Fateh at times, but were less influential.

Palestinian-Lebanese relations in 1969–70 were also influenced by rivalries between Fateh and Sa'iqa. Whenever Fateh and Sa'iqa and, by extension, the Syrian regime were in agreement in Lebanon, Fateh assumed a dominant role and was thus in a position to shape PLO policy in Lebanon. But when the two organisations were at odds, Fateh's field of action was constrained. In the late 1960s, the PLO stood to benefit from the ongoing power struggle in Syria between the regime of Salah Jadid and his powerful rival Hafez al-Asad. As the two men tried to win PLO organisations over as part of their internal disputes, Palestinian organisations, especially Sa'iqa, received arms and were given assistance in Lebanon.⁴⁹

While initially Sa'iqa was the most established Palestinian group in Lebanon, Fateh quickly gained the upper-hand. Arafat assumed PLO leadership in February 1969. By the end of the year he consolidated power and emerged as the strong leader of the PLO, partly because he controlled the largest guerrilla organisation and partly because the influence of his

rivals (especially the commanders of the Palestine Liberation Army) was weakening. In firm control of the PLO, Arafat took a hard-line position in Lebanon and became even more adamant than Syrian and Sa'iqa leaders.⁵⁰

Crisis Escalates and Deadlock Deepens The country plunged into a government crisis the settlement of which depended on a new definition of Lebanese–Palestinian relations. Iraqi mediation between the Lebanese government and the PLO failed and was quickly ended. With Syria's backing, Palestinian leaders rejected any deal with the Lebanese government short of granting freedom of action to the Fedayin.

On 6 May, the funeral procession of a Feda'i in the streets of Beirut aggravated an already tense situation. Shops were closed down in areas where the procession took place and people shouted slogans against the Lebanese government, while some carried weapons.⁵¹ The funeral was attended by Prime Minister Karame, other cabinet members and leading Muslim politicians.⁵² This show of support by Karame and other officials at a time when the country was in the midst of a serious political crisis over the Fedayin problem weakened Lebanon's position towards the PLO. Irrespective of his intentions, Karame's move was interpreted as an act of support for the PLO in its dispute with government authorities. Backed by the Sunni political establishment, Karame would not form a new cabinet nor would other established Sunni politicians.⁵³ Nor was Helou willing to resort to his constitutional powers and designate another politician to form a cabinet without the consent of the Sunni political establishment.

On the same day of the funeral, fighting erupted in the south between Lebanese Army troops and the guerrillas resulting in the death of one Lebanese soldier and seven guerrillas (five from Fateh and two from Sa'iqa).⁵⁴ It was the first time that Fateh announced in a communiqué the

death of some of its members in clashes with the Lebanese Army. Arafat, who was then outside Lebanon, arrived the next day in Beirut and was now not only Fateh's leader but also chairman of the PLO. He came to Beirut to demand unrestricted freedom of action for the Fedayin in Lebanon (*huriyyat al-'amal al-Feda'i*). The Lebanese government rejected Arafat's demand and insisted that the PLO could engage only in political activities.⁵⁵

A six-hour meeting was held at the presidential palace and was attended by Helou, Karame, Arafat, Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) and Nasser's envoy Hassan Sabri al-Kholy, who arrived in Beirut on 3 May. It was agreed that two committees would be formed to continue talks. The Lebanese committee was headed by Boustany and included Chief of Staff Shmayet and officers Fawzi al-Khatib and Gaby Lahoud. The Palestinian committee, headed by Arafat, included Abu Yusif al-Najjar and two other members.⁵⁶ The two committees held several meetings but no agreement was reached.

Egyptian mediation meant, in effect, implicit backing for the PLO position. By not attempting to moderate PLO demands, Cairo gave the Palestinian platform *de facto* legitimacy. In 1969, before the second Rogers Plan became a contentious issue in Arab politics, the Palestinian position was in line with that of Egypt. At that time, Cairo was not willing to put pressure on the Palestinian leadership to adopt a more conciliatory position in Lebanon. Nor did Cairo have an interest in doing so since the ending of the crisis had no direct impact on Egyptian relations with other Arab countries. It was not until a few months later that Nasser took greater interest in the crisis in Lebanon when it began to have negative repercussions on regional politics.

Pressure on Lebanon was also exerted from Arab regimes, notably Syria and Iraq. Prominent Sunni leaders became frequent visitors to Damascus, as did Jumblatt, who emerged as Syria's closest ally during the crisis, and co-operated with Karame. This state of affairs was described by one newspaper editorial: 'after forty-six days of the crisis, the people resort to Karame [to form a cabinet], he instead seeks support from Jumblatt who, in turn, seeks advice from outside parties'.⁵⁷

As the stalemate continued, PLO leaders reiterated their demands in a more forceful way. Following the sixth convention of the Palestinian National Council, held in early September in Cairo, the PLO ruled out any

kind of accommodation with the Lebanese government. This position was expressed in the uncompromising statement that 'not a single Feda'i will withdraw from the south'.⁵⁸ By then, PLO military capabilities continued to improve. According to Lebanese security sources, the number of guerrillas based in the south in July 1969 was close to 4000 most of whom were with Sa'iqa (1475), followed by Fateh (1300), the Arab Liberation Front (700), PFLP (200) and PLA (300).⁵⁹

After nearly two months of calm, clashes erupted in August 1969 between the guerrillas and Lebanese security forces at the Nahr al-Barid camp near the northern city of Tripoli.⁶⁰ They resulted in a number of casualties, including one bodyguard of a Tripoli leader, Faruq al-Muqaddam,⁶¹ the founder of the 'Movement of 24 October'. Efforts to settle the Nahr al-Barid incident failed, because the Palestinian leadership refused to hand over the perpetrators to the Lebanese authorities. Instead, they demanded that the 'terrorist siege around the camp be lifted'.⁶²

Meanwhile, Palestinian-Israeli confrontations continued in the south causing civilian casualties and damage to property.⁶³ In early September, Israel carried out commando operations inside Lebanese territory, the largest since the airport raid.⁶⁴ The situation was equally bad on the Palestinian-Lebanese front. Beginning on 23 October 1969, large scale military confrontations took place in various parts of the country; they were the worst since the April clashes. Fighting started when Lebanese Army troops clashed with a large Feda'i force in the southern village of Majdel Silm. It went on for two days and spread to nearby villages. Clashes were also reported in the Nahr al-Barid and Baddawi camps near Tripoli.⁶⁵ In the Borj al-Barajneh camp Lebanese internal security elements were kidnapped, and along the Syrian-Lebanese borders six Christian customs employees were killed by Sa'iqa members.⁶⁶

Contrary to previous clashes usually provoked by a variety of non-military means (demonstrations, commemorations of particular events, funeral processions, etc.), this time the guerrillas went on the offensive. Attacks by both Fateh and Sa'iqa, as well as by other organisations had well-defined military objectives. More important, now the guerrillas were in a position to initiate a military confrontation without any political and

ideological cover from Lebanese supporters, as was the case a few months earlier. They could also draw Arab support for the action.

Syria was the first Arab country to react by closing off its borders with Lebanon. Libya broke off diplomatic relations with Lebanon, while Baghdad called on its citizens to leave Lebanon in 24 hours. Within a few days about 6,000 Iraqis, who were spending the summer in Lebanon, were gone.⁶⁷ Other Arab countries condemned the Lebanese government for 'suppressing the Palestinian revolution' and for being a stooge of 'American imperialism'.⁶⁸ Demonstrations were held in several Lebanese cities, and fighting spread to Tripoli and the Beqa resulting in a high casualty toll.⁶⁹ In the south, Lebanese army troops clashed with Syrian forces trying to infiltrate into the region.⁷⁰

With the escalation of fighting, another Egyptian mediation was attempted, but this time with Nasser's involvement. A Lebanese delegation, headed by Army Commander Emile Boustany, went to Cairo on 28 October. Arafat, who was expected to arrive in Cairo the same day, denounced the Lebanese government in a press conference held in Damascus and reaffirmed that no agreement would be signed unless guerrilla operations are allowed from Lebanese territory.

Arafat's fiery statements were made after the Lebanese delegation had arrived in Cairo.⁷¹ This was a tactical move aimed at putting pressure on the Lebanese government prior to the Cairo talks. It was not until Lebanese-Egyptian talks were ended, and after Boustany extended his stay at the request of Egyptian officials,⁷² that Arafat arrived in Cairo. The next day an agreement was reached: the Cairo Agreement, signed on 3 November 1969 by Yasir Arafat and General Boustany.

A few weeks after the signing of the Cairo Agreement, a new cabinet was formed; it received the Parliament's vote of confidence on the basis of the Cairo Agreement. Although officially the Cairo Agreement was kept secret, President Helou informed several politicians, notably Christian leaders opposed to guerrilla activities in Lebanon, of its content. The agreement was kept secret so that Israel would not use it as a pretext to attack Lebanon and to justify its action on the grounds that Lebanon was engaged in a state of war with Israel in violation of the 1949 armistice agreement.⁷³

Divergent Views on PLO Armed Presence Contrary to the 1958 crisis, when political fragmentation involved internal and external issues, grievances concerning the issue of power-sharing were not voiced in 1969, nor were socio-economic problems an issue of debate. And ‘unlike 1958,’ Michael Hudson observed, ‘the present struggle [the 1969 crisis] was not mainly between establishment factions quarrelling over who should govern in Beirut; it found the Lebanese system itself caught between the seemingly irresistible force of radicalism symbolised by the Palestinian Resistance and the apparently immovable object of Israel.’⁷⁴

Differences among Lebanese leaders centred on the degree of compatibility between national sovereignty and PLO armed presence. In other words, how to strike a balance between Palestinian ‘sovereignty’ in Lebanon and Lebanon’s sovereignty and national security? Views on this controversial matter were radically different. While most Christian leaders saw no compatibility between Lebanese national interests and those of the guerrillas, Jumblatt, along with leading Sunni politicians, favoured giving the guerrillas freedom of action in line with Lebanon’s ‘obligation in the Arab struggle against the Israeli enemy.’

Underlying these views are two divergent historical readings of the Palestinian problem, and two different assumptions regarding Lebanon’s role in inter-Arab politics and in the larger Arab-Israeli conflict. Christian leaders, though supportive of the Palestinian cause, were not willing to compromise Lebanese sovereignty and stability for the sake of guerrilla activities. Lebanon’s military capabilities, they argued, were limited and Lebanon had not been at war with Israel since 1948; Lebanon had no reason

to wage war against Israel since it had no occupied territory to liberate. For them, the Palestinians had objectives of their own which ran counter to those of Lebanon. The best Lebanon could offer to the Palestinian cause, Christian leaders argued, was political and diplomatic support. The PLO was not perceived as having an inherent right to claim the country's limited resources only because it was championing an Arab nationalist cause. In fact, there was little faith among Lebanon's Christians, particularly the Maronites, in the vague concepts of Arab solidarity, much less in the notion of common Arab objectives, be they among the Palestinians themselves or between the latter and other Arab regimes.

In this way, many Christians regarded Israel's raids in Lebanon as the result of PLO provocations. In fact, no systematic military confrontations took place between Lebanon and Israel since 1948, and it was not until after PLO guerrillas began to conduct raids against Israel in 1968 that the latter retaliated and inflicted damage on civilian targets in Lebanon and on the guerrillas. Therefore, the best way to deny Israel a pretext to attack, and eventually to carry out expansionist designs in south Lebanon, was to curb PLO military activities.

Lebanese Muslims, for their part, particularly Sunni leaders, had a different reading of the problem. For them, the Palestinian struggle was part and parcel of the Arab causes they had supported ever since Greater Lebanon was formed. At first, after World War I, there was the Faisal-led Arab nationalist movement in Damascus, which championed the cause of Arab unity. In the 1950s, Nasser emerged as the supreme leader and articulator of pan-Arabism. And since 1967, the PLO, with its powerful revolutionary symbolism, became the cause to which many turned for inspiration and leadership. Where Christians and Muslims parted ways was not on the justness of the Palestinian cause and on the need to support it, but on the ways to support it without endangering Lebanon's security and stability.

Another disagreement reflected the divergent readings of the Israeli component of the Palestinian problem. From the standpoint of Muslim leaders, the root cause of the problem was not Palestinian provocation of Israel, but rather the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine and, more important, the perils it constituted to Lebanon and its resources, particularly

water resources in the south.⁷⁵ According to this view, ‘the expansionist objectives of the Zionist enemy’ were real and, therefore, had little to do with Palestinian guerrilla operations against Israel from Lebanese territory. With that in mind, Muslim leaders, particularly the Sunni political and religious establishments, called for ‘unconditional’ support for the guerrillas and for the ‘protection of the Revolution’ (*himayat al-thawra*) from internal and external foes.

In addition to the Christian and Muslim attitudes towards the problem as it emerged in 1969, there was a third position: that of the Lebanese state. This position was best reflected in the way in which Helou and Karame handled the crisis leading up to the signing of the Cairo Agreement. One issue dominated the political scene: where to draw a line between the notion of co-ordination (*tansiq*) with the guerrillas and the imperatives of Lebanese sovereignty (*siyada*).

The Sunni leadership, whose position was best represented by Karame, advocated a policy of co-ordination with the guerrillas. The Maronite leadership, on the other hand, regarded *tansiq* as a violation of Lebanese sovereignty. This position was articulated by Helou in his address to the nation, delivered on 31 May, nearly 40 days after the cabinet crisis.⁷⁶ In that brief message, Helou rejected all attempts to dictate policies, which would imperil Lebanon’s sovereignty and security. The problem, Helou said, ‘is not caused by Lebanon’s refusal to contribute to the [Palestinian] cause..., but because of continuing attempts, day after day, to impose on us the politics of *the fait accompli* (*al-amr al-waqi*).’ Helou then stressed that ‘agreement among the Lebanese regarding the Palestinian struggle should not come as a compromise between contradictory emotional stands shaped by changing circumstances and events; rather, it should be based on clear principles and solid foundations. This means that we should recognise our obligations toward the Palestinian struggle and support it, but only within the limits of our capabilities, which we alone are entitled to determine in light of the imperatives of our national sovereignty and security. This should serve ... as a base to any solution.’ He then affirmed that ‘his constitutional duties were to preserve the sovereignty and independence of the country, and warned that a failure to allow Lebanon to exercise national

sovereignty would have grave consequences, including Israeli designs to alter the political map of the entire region.'

Although Helou's message was favourably received,⁷⁷ some politicians were taken aback by the blunt tone of the message and the open recognition of the seriousness of the crisis. Among those politicians was Rashid Karame. While not criticizing the overall content of the message, Karame emphasised that the government also shared responsibility for the preservation of the constitution. He then added that rule involved power-sharing between the president and the prime minister, and ended his statement by reiterating that 'co-ordination was not incompatible with sovereignty'.⁷⁸

Helou's account of the crisis was largely shared by the populace. In an opinion poll conducted by the centrist daily *al-Nahar* nearly one month later, 49.5 per cent fully supported Helou's message, 20.5 per cent were supportive but with reservations, 19.8 per cent were against and 10.3 expressed no opinion. Moreover, 59.3 per cent thought that the president's position was in line with the imperatives of national sovereignty, as opposed to 10.6 per cent and 7.6 per cent for the positions of the prime minister and the speaker of parliament respectively.⁷⁹

Most descriptive of the nature of the crisis was a list of twelve questions that President Helou submitted to members of parliament, in which he outlined the various aspects of the crisis in a systematic and straightforward manner.⁸⁰ They were divided into four categories, one dealing with facts and the three others dealing with the issues of sovereignty, security and the government's handling of the crisis.

First, Helou asked whether the deputies were fully aware of the facts surrounding the events, especially those coming from Lebanese military sources as opposed to Palestinian sources. For if the latter sources were to be trusted, said Helou, then no proper Lebanese policy could be pursued. Second, with respect to national sovereignty, Helou stated that the Palestinians sought 'to impose their armed presence and strategy on Lebanon'. Palestinian declarations, he continued, made it clear that Palestinian organisations were not prepared to give up their bases and training centres in Lebanon (he was referring to a Fateh-run al-'Assifa radio broadcast dated 25 June 1969). As for the problems of security, Helou

raised the following question: 'If one assumed that [the Palestinian armed presence] did not violate Lebanese sovereignty, would it then be accurate to say that it was compatible with our security?'⁸¹ Helou was touching on a concrete issue, the security of Lebanese citizens, which was of more pressing concern than the controversy over the definition of national sovereignty. Helou stated four reasons why Fedayin activities and bases, particularly in the south, jeopardised national security and curtailed Lebanon's ability to obtain United Nations condemnations of Israeli raids.

Concerning the government crisis Helou questioned whether it was at all possible to reach agreement among the Lebanese as well as between the latter and the Fedayin without taking into account the integrity of the country's constitutional institutions. He then went on to say that 'not only was there a difference between the true Fedayin action, that is, in the occupied territories, and the practices of the Palestinian organisations in Lebanon, there was a contradiction as well, especially when the Palestinians themselves fail to make this distinction.' Since no distinction was made between military operations in the occupied territories and Palestinian actions in Lebanon, 'would it not then be that the best way to deal with this situation is to reject the existing situation altogether'. Given these facts and conditions, Helou asked: 'could the president evade his duties and fail to live up to the oath of preserving the constitution?'⁸²

A lawyer by profession and a former journalist and diplomat, Helou was a better statesman in non-crisis situations than in situations that required decisive action, as in 1969.⁸³ Without a popular power base of his own, Helou relied on the Chehabist establishment for support, only to become a captive of the political machinations of the Deuxième Bureau. Helou was Chehab's nominee for the presidency, mainly because he was not a traditional politician with a communal following.⁸⁴ Helou's tacit backing of the Maronite leaders who formed the Tripartite Alliance in the 1968 parliamentary elections placed him in an untenable position between his new anti-Chehabist supporters and the Chehabist establishment, which he could neither ignore nor openly oppose. But irrespective of Helou's political vulnerability, no military action against the guerrillas was possible without an unambiguous political backing from Muslim leaders, and specifically from the prime minister.

Nearly one month after the April clashes, Karame agreed to form a cabinet thanks to Cairo, and specifically to the good offices of Egyptian Ambassador Ibrahim Sabri.⁸⁵ Karame was the prime minister-designate, but no cabinet was formed. The stalemate was institutionalised, and a pattern for inaction and political paralysis was in place. This is how *al-Nahar* cartoonist Pierre Sadiq depicted the situation:⁸⁶ Day one, Karame visits the presidential palace; day two, the picture becomes clearer; day three, obstacles are removed; day four, the empty circle; day five, decisive meetings; day six, Jumblatt's statement, and on Sunday Karame rests in his hometown. This weekly 'schedule' of inaction continued until the signing of the Cairo agreement.

Options Assessed The debate on the nature and scope of PLO armed presence in the late 1960s was revealed in the proceedings of a meeting held at the presidential palace on 10 June 1969.⁸⁷ Those attending the meeting, in addition to Helou and Karame, were Speaker Sabri Hamadeh, Defence Minister Majid Arslan, Army Commander Emile Boustany, Army Chief of Staff Yusif Shmayet and Army Intelligence Chief Gaby Lahoud. One item figured on the agenda: how to deal with the expanding Palestinian armed presence in the country?

After presenting a detailed account of successive Palestinian attempts to infiltrate Lebanon and establish permanent military bases, Helou warned that agreement with the guerrillas was 'more dangerous for Lebanon than the absence of agreement⁵: any deal would force Lebanon to make concessions and would give the presence of guerrillas de facto recognition and rights to operate on Lebanese soil. Helou was responding to Karame, who argued in favour of direct negotiation with the Palestinians. According

to Karame, an agreement with the guerrillas was the only solution since their presence was a *fait accompli*; they entered Lebanon without Lebanon's consent, Karame explained, and the use of force against them would be counterproductive.⁸⁸ He then stressed that through negotiations the guerrillas would be convinced to keep their demands to a minimum.⁸⁹

Arslan then noted that Lebanon was facing a vicious circle: confrontations with the guerrillas were not possible, nor would negotiations lead to a solution. He then indicated that the Lebanese Army in the south was facing an embarrassing situation and called for quick and decisive action to end the crisis. Lahoud, for his part, explained that Palestinian strategy consisted of opening up the front in the south against Israel. This, he added, would eventually lead to Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory. Therefore, a political decision should be taken to prevent guerrilla take-over and Israeli occupation. Lahoud wrote off the possibility of brokering a deal with the guerrillas, which would spare Lebanon damage, and stressed that any deal was damaging for Lebanon.⁹⁰

Shmayet argued that the Lebanese government should be careful even in the use of words when dealing with the guerrillas. Shmayet explained, using a map, that the Fedayin should be based in a region in the south where it would be difficult for Israel to locate their presence along the Lebanese-Syrian borders.⁹¹ He recommended that the entry of the guerrillas should be only by way of 'infiltration' so that Lebanon would not be accused by Israel of giving the guerrillas permanent shelter. For this reason, Shmayet argued, no formal agreement should be made with the guerrillas, nor should Lebanon openly refuse their presence.⁹²

Boustany then underlined the complex nature of the problem by saying that using force against the guerrillas would deepen internal divisions and isolate Lebanon in the Arab world. But he also pointed out that if the guerrillas were allowed to operate freely Israeli attacks could follow and the Lebanese would be turned into refugees.⁹³ A least costly formula should be adopted. Perhaps, Boustany continued, the guerrillas would eventually withdraw from Lebanon.

At that point, Helou wrapped up the discussion by saying that allowing the infiltration of the guerrillas into Israel rather than officially recognising their presence was the least costly alternative. Support for the guerrillas

should be in line with the imperatives of Lebanon's military interests. Helou ended by stressing the need to form a new cabinet to end the political crisis and take a stand towards the Fedayin action.⁹⁴ In response, Karame claimed that such measures were not sufficient to settle the problem arguing that 'the Fedayin have their logic, and only an agreement with them will lead to a result'.⁹⁵ Hamadeh, who joined the meeting late, called for a deal with the guerrillas that would not be damaging to Lebanon for 'we do not allow foreigners to engage in military operations against our country'.⁹⁶ But he added that negotiations with the guerrillas should take place only after a cabinet is formed.

This discussion between the country's political and military leadership, which took place nearly four months before the signing of the Cairo Agreement, mirrored the internal divide: the president, the speaker, the defence minister, and the military command versus Premier Karame. While views differed on which course of action to pursue to handle the guerrilla presence, all parties opposed any policy that would give the guerrillas official recognition and a permanent military presence. And they all agreed on the need to end the ministerial crisis by forming a cabinet. Karame, alone, argued for a negotiated settlement with the guerrillas and made this a condition for the formation of a new cabinet.

Decision-Making in a Crisis Situation Involving the PLO: Political Paralysis Karame's stand was supported by the Sunni political establishment, that is, by his political rivals, notably Sa'eb Salam, and by Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt. These positions effectively vetoed President Helou who was neither able to form a cabinet without Sunni backing and approval or designate a new premier other than Karame since the latter was the only de facto Sunni candidate backed by the Sunni political

establishment. The outcome was a political paralysis broken only by the renewal of military confrontations between the Lebanese Army and the guerrillas in October 1969.

Meanwhile, Karame was not willing to form a cabinet prior to agreement with the PLO, nor was he willing to endorse Helou's position. Instead, a wait-and-see position suited him best.⁹⁷ He would wait until the Cairo talks were over to take a stand. Should the talks be successful he would then come out in support. Should the talks fail, he would have no part in the failure, and would thus avoid blame for the crisis.

Karame's evasive political style was reflected in his handling of the Cairo talks. He agreed to a request by Helou to head the Lebanese delegation in his capacity as designate premier. The delegation consisted of Boustany, the director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Najib Sadaka, Lebanon's ambassador to Cairo Halim Abu 'Izzedin and Major Sami al-Khatib.⁹⁸ Shmayet was initially asked to join the delegation but he declined and claimed that he was ill and was unable to travel.⁹⁹

As Arafat escalated his demands from Damascus, Karame quickly dissociated himself from the official Lebanese position and declared that the delegation represented only the views of the president. As described in a newspaper editorial, 'the resigned, designate, and declined prime minister dissociates himself from the results of the talks, while he demands that the president should accept a position of co-ordination as a condition for his departure to Cairo.'¹⁰⁰

In the end, Karame never went to Cairo. Following the formation of the delegation on 28 October Karame and Boustany agreed to go to Cairo that same day at 6 pm.¹⁰¹ According to Boustany, Karame told him that he had to go to Tripoli, prepare his luggage and say good-bye to his mother, and then he would meet him at the airport.¹⁰² Karame did not show up at 6 pm and Boustany was informed by Helou through Najib Sadaka to travel and that Karame would join him in Cairo the next day.¹⁰³ Boustany arrived in Cairo and was met by demonstrators at Cairo airport shouting slogans in support of the PLO.¹⁰⁴ The following day, Major Sami al-Khatib, who

accompanied Boustany, went to the airport to meet Karame who did not turn up. Instead he sent a message with the airline pilot that he would be in Cairo in the evening.¹⁰⁵

The Lebanese delegation held meetings with Egyptian War Minister General Mohammad Fawzi and Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad and Hassan Sabri alKholi on 28, 29 and 30 October. Boustany informed Helou that if Karame did not show up he would have to leave.¹⁰⁶ To that Helou replied that Lebanon was committed to Nasser and to the talks and that he should consult the Egyptian president on the matter.¹⁰⁷ Karame was not the only absentee head of delegation; Arafat also did not show up. Nasser sent Fawzi, Riad and Sami Sharaf to inform Boustany that Arafat would arrive in the evening of 31 October, and that Nasser proposed to convey a message to Helou to have Boustany lead the delegation.¹⁰⁸ Boustany then telephoned Helou to inform him of the developments, and Helou asked him to lead the delegation.¹⁰⁹ By then, it became clear that Karame was not coming to Cairo. Karame claimed that he suddenly fell ill and was no longer able to travel.¹¹⁰ Perhaps Karame's initial intention had been to go to Cairo. But when Arafat hardened his position after the Lebanese delegation arrived in Cairo, he was less willing to deal with this difficult situation.¹¹¹

Since the late 1960s, an increasingly active Sunni counter-elite began to pose a threat to the traditional elite, for now it received support from Palestinian organisations and Arab regimes. While this pattern of intra-Sunni politics became more visible in the 1970s, in 1969 it was reflected in the opposition that Karame faced in his hometown, Tripoli, from a radical counter-elite represented by a pro-Iraqi Ba'thist politician 'Abdul-Majid al-Rafi'i and by Faruq al-Muqaddam.¹¹²

Talks Before the Cairo Talks In May 1969 three rounds of talks were held between Lebanese Army officers and Palestinian leaders. The first, held on 8 May, was between a Lebanese military delegation headed by Shmayet and a Palestinian delegation headed by Arafat. The two delegations were formed

following a meeting between Helou and Arafat. The meeting was arranged upon the request of Egyptian mediator Hassan Sabri alKholi.¹¹³ These talks produced no results.¹¹⁴

But the more important talks were those that took place between Boustany and Arafat on 9 May 1969. They were arranged by Palestinian economist and later head of the PLO Planning Centre Yusif Sayigh and Lebanese Sunni intellectual Hassan Sa'b, at the request of Arafat.¹¹⁵ This secret meeting was held in the house of Sayigh. Arafat was accompanied by Abu Yusif al-Najjar, Kamal 'Adwan and Khalid al-Yashruti.¹¹⁶

After explaining how the Palestinian cause concerned all Arab countries, including Lebanon, Arafat went on to say that neither the PLO nor Arab countries would accept that Lebanon remain 'neutral' in the struggle.¹¹⁷ We have new weapons, Arafat continued, and we were going to use them on all fronts bordering Palestine.¹¹⁸ He then explained that Israel had designs on Lebanon and its waters.¹¹⁹ After stressing that the PLO would respect commitments with the Lebanese authorities and that the guerrillas would conduct operations against targets only in Israel, Arafat asked that Lebanon should allow the PLO to have surveillance posts in specific locations to facilitate the movement of the guerrillas with the approval of the Lebanese Army and under its supervision.¹²⁰ Arafat then ended on a threatening note: the Lebanese borders were bound to be opened for military operations against Israel, just like other border areas in other Arab countries, so it would be better for Lebanon to accept co-ordination willingly rather than be forced to do that against its will.¹²¹ Boustany, for his part, reiterated the Lebanese position regarding the armistice agreement with Israel and said that guerrilla operations would give Israel a pretext to attack Lebanon and to wage pre-emptive strikes against Arab countries, as it did in 1956 and 1967.¹²²

The two sides drafted an unofficial 15-point agreement, which was signed by Boustany and Arafat. When the meeting ended, Boustany went to see Karame who read the agreement and was pleased with its content.¹²³ The

next day, on 10 May, Boustany met with Helou and gave him a copy of the agreement. According to Helou, Boustany did not seek his prior approval for his meeting with Arafat.¹²⁴ In response to Helou's condemnation of such an unauthorised move, Boustany explained that the text of the agreement was not official and that it was only a project to be discussed.¹²⁵

The main provisions of the 9 May agreement were the following:¹²⁶ (i) Control of the pro-Syrian Sa'iqa and the prevention of its intervention in Lebanese affairs; (ii) Conduct a census of Palestinian armed elements in Lebanon; (iii) The two commands should determine the number of armed elements needed to engage in military operations from Lebanese territory; (iv) Specify the location of guerrilla bases in the border areas with Lebanese army command; (v) Organise the movement of the guerrillas; (vi) The training of Palestinian and Lebanese elements by the Lebanese Army who will join the Resistance; (vii) Various provisions for cooperation between the two sides in military and non-military fields.

In the agreement, the only Palestinian group to be controlled was the pro-Syrian Sa'iqa, Fateh's main rival in Lebanon. No restrictions were placed on Fateh or other Palestinian organisations. The agreement also emphasised co-operation between the two sides, but for the purpose of facilitating guerrilla activities. In none of the 15 points was there a mention of respect of Lebanese sovereignty and national security. From the standpoint of May 1969, only five weeks after the cabinet crisis, the agreement made significant concessions to the guerrillas. Above all, it met the PLO's central demand: freedom of Fedayin action.

Another meeting took place on 11 May. It grouped a Lebanese delegation headed by Colonel Lahoud (which included two Army Intelligence officers, Sami al-Khatib and 'Abbas Hamdan), and a Palestinian delegation headed by General 'Abdul Razzaq Yahya and composed of Khalid al-Hassan, Yasir 'Amru, Kamal Nasser and Shafiq al-Hout.¹²⁷ Egyptian mediator al-Kholi took part in this meeting which was held at the initiative of Lahoud, who later informed the president of its outcome. At the request of al-Kholi the proceedings of the meeting were recorded.¹²⁸ The outcome was a nine-point agreement.¹²⁹ It called for an immediate freeze on military operations in 'Arqub and within Israel. It opposed an increase in the number of guerrillas during the period of the freeze. It also called for the adoption of measures to

defuse tensions between the two parties and to make sure that the guerrillas in the south would not cause any provocation to the Lebanese Army.

The Lahoud agreement differed fundamentally from the Boustany-Arafat agreement both in tone and substance. Whereas the latter met Palestinian demands and committed the Lebanese Army to assist the guerrillas, the former put a freeze on Palestinian military activities, warned the guerrillas of not provoking turmoil, and excluded co-operation with them. At that time, Helou was opposed to the signing of any agreement with the guerrillas.¹³⁰ And to give his position more credibility and greater political weight, he suggested that Nasser's envoy al-Kholi should confer with former President Chehab on the issue. Al-Kholi met with Chehab who conveyed to him that he was opposed to any kind of permanent guerrilla presence in Lebanon.¹³¹

No other direct or indirect talks were held with Palestinian officials during the next four months. What reactivated the crisis was the renewal of clashes between the Lebanese Army and the guerrillas on 23 October 1969. Once again, the search for ways to end the crisis began. By then, Helou conceded that some form of coordination with the guerrillas was inevitable, but the problem was how to make it work.¹³² In the presence of Karame, Boustany, Shmayet, Lahoud and Boutros Deeb, Helou outlined nine guidelines for any arrangement with the guerrillas.¹³³ For Helou, any agreement should be in accordance with Lebanon's national sovereignty and should preserve the security of its people. A limited number of guerrillas would be able to operate in the country but would be subject to the Lebanese civilian and military authorities.¹³⁴ All armed activities and movement of guerrillas would be carried out in agreement with Army Command. Lebanese law would apply to the refugee population. In collaboration with government authorities, refugees could organise the camps but would not be allowed to have heavy weapons in the camps. Guerrillas would not be allowed to carry weapons or wear special uniforms unless they were performing military duties. The presence and actions of the Palestinian Resistance would have to be kept secret.

The Cairo Talks

The Cairo talks between the Lebanese and Egyptian delegations went on for three consecutive days. According to Helou, Boustany was not granted any special powers, except those that allowed him to negotiate the military (or the technical) aspect of any agreement with the Palestinian leadership.¹³⁵

In three sessions of talks, General Boustany presented a detailed account of the evolution of guerrilla activities in Lebanon in 1968 and 1969.¹³⁶ Infiltrations from Syria had continued to increase, Boustany explained, and they were not confined to the Palestinian guerrillas; they also included Syrian soldiers who took part in clashes against the Lebanese Army.¹³⁷ By May 1969, Boustany said, the number of guerrillas in Lebanon was 4,000. The problem, he added, was aggravated by the fact that the guerrillas sought to expand their military presence beyond the 'Arqub region. They were also meddling in internal Lebanese politics by supporting particular political parties. This meant that the problem with the guerrillas was not only military but also political. Boustany then suggested that Lebanon would only allow guerrilla presence in 'Arqub and would facilitate their movement by building special roads.

In the second session, Najib Sadaka presented the political dimension of the problem. The thrust of Sadaka's expose was that Lebanon was favourably predisposed to co-operate with the guerrillas but only within its capabilities and in line with the imperatives of national sovereignty. He also stressed that Arab regimes should refrain from exploiting the events and that their state-controlled media should stop their campaigns against the Lebanese government.

In his reply to Sadaka, Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad acknowledged Lebanon's particular circumstances and delicate political structure. But he added that Lebanon should take part in the cause. He was also concerned about American intentions in Lebanon.¹³⁸ He emphasised that the handling of the crisis should stay within an Arab framework. Boustany replied that the Lebanese government was not envisaging any American involvement.

Nasser's representative Hassan Sabri al-Kholi, who had returned from Damascus, informed the Lebanese delegation that President Atassi of Syria

had assured him that the borders with Lebanon will be opened once an agreement is reached with the guerrillas.¹³⁹ Kholi then outlined the Palestinian position: freedom of military and political action, bringing those responsible for the recent clashes to trial, non-intervention in Lebanese internal politics and respect for Lebanese sovereignty and security.¹⁴⁰ General Fawzi then raised the issue of Lebanon's military contribution to the battle against Israel. He hinted at a possible formula for coordination between Syria and Lebanon.

In the third session, Egyptian mediators proposed that Lebanon should present an official document that indicates the facilities that can be offered to the guerrillas. Boustany opposed the proposal and stressed that while Lebanon was willing to co-operate Arafat did not even bother to come to Cairo. Minister Riad did not insist on the demand but agreed with the Lebanese delegation to have a copy of the proceedings of their meetings and of the Boustany-Arafat agreement of 9 May 1969. Boustany added to Article One of the 9 May Agreement, 'the respect of Lebanon's sovereignty and security', as indicated by Helou, and replaced the reference to Sa'iqa in article 2 with 'all Palestinian organisations'.¹⁴¹ Riad indicated that it was preferable not to use the word mediation when referring to Egypt's role, for technically it did not apply, and Egypt was not a party to the conflict. Addressing himself to Boustany, Fawzi said that with such provisions Lebanon would be able to control the guerrillas.¹⁴² But before controlling the guerrillas control was needed to keep the delegation together. As the third session of talks ended, the Lebanese delegation lost yet another member: Najib Sadaka who dealt with the political aspects of the negotiations, replacing Karame. Sadaka returned to Beirut because, like Karame and Shmayet a few days earlier, he suddenly fell ill.

Despite Egypt's unwillingness to be recognised as an official mediator, its role was decisive in bringing about a settlement. Immediately following the October clashes, Nasser sent a letter to Helou on 22 October in which he expressed concern over the deteriorating relations between Lebanon and the guerrillas and called upon Helou to intervene to stop the fighting.¹⁴³ Helou replied pointing out that Nasser was ill-informed about developments and that he was willing to take the necessary measures to settle the problem. He also informed the Egyptian ambassador in Beirut of the events and charged

the Lebanese ambassador to provide detailed information to the Egyptian authorities.¹⁴⁴ Lebanon's ambassador Halim Abu 'Izzeddin conveyed Helou's letter to the Egyptian vice-president Anwar Sadat and explained that clashes began when PLO guerrillas entered the central sector of the Lebanon-Israel border area,¹⁴⁵ in an attempt to expand beyond the 'Arqub area where they were already present. Abu 'Izzeddin also conveyed Helou's proposal for an Egyptian mediating role to bring about a settlement to the crisis.¹⁴⁶

Nasser's reply in a second letter on 23 October emphasised the need to end military confrontations, all the more so since Prime Minister Karame declared that he did not assume responsibility for what happened to the Resistance.¹⁴⁷ Nasser indicated that the events were cause for concern for Arab public opinion and called upon Helou, to opt for dialogue and help end the crisis on the grounds that Lebanon was an integral part of the Arab nation. He then offered Egypt's willingness to respond to any useful suggestions to reach a settlement.¹⁴⁸ On 24 October, Helou replied by asserting his desire to co-operate and to help find a settlement that would respect the interests of all parties.¹⁴⁹

While Cairo sought to end the crisis, its objective was a settlement that would insure the freedom of Fidayin action, as explained in an *al-Ahram* editorial which appeared on 28 October, the day the Lebanese delegation arrived in Cairo.¹⁵⁰ This was the principal objective that concerned Egypt; all other issues were secondary.¹⁵¹ This meant that Egypt's mediation was on the basis of meeting PLO demands. Egypt's position, in other words, was to support PLO military activities in Lebanon while seeking to attend to Lebanese interests as much as possible. In fact, opening up the front along the Lebanese-Israeli border was in line with Nasser's strategy in the post-1967 phase of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It was against this setting that Lebanese-Egyptian talks were held while waiting for the Palestinian delegation to arrive.

On 2 November, the Palestinian delegation headed by Arafat and composed of 'Abdul-Razzak Yahya, Yasir 'Amru, Khalid al-Yashruti, Bilal al-Hasan, Abu Iyad and Abu Sabri, arrived in Cairo and Lebanese-Palestinian talks began.¹⁵² Representatives of Habash and Hawatmeh in the delegation demanded that the guerrillas should have permanent bases in the

border area.¹⁵³ Boustany rejected this hard-line position. The negotiations centred on the 9 May Agreement.¹⁵⁴ Following the official talks, Arafat met with Boustany separately along with Khalid al-Yashruti and assured him that he would respect Lebanese sovereignty and national interests.¹⁵⁵ Arafat emphasised that Nasser told him that any agreement signed under his auspices would have to be respected by both sides.¹⁵⁶ The next day after long sessions of talks, the Cairo Agreement was signed in the presence of Riad and Fawzi. Nasser informed Helou of the agreement, and on 4 November Boustany met with Nasser and flew back to Beirut.

Meanwhile, no direct contacts were made between Boustany and Helou.¹⁵⁷ According to Helou, the text of the agreement was different from the one that was initially presented to the Egyptian delegation.¹⁵⁸ He then explained that the first four articles (articles 1 to 4) of the Cairo Agreement were added to the initial text. Helou then demanded from Boustany a written statement explaining how to make the guerrillas abide by Lebanon's sovereignty and security.¹⁵⁹ Having failed to reply, Helou addressed a letter to Boustany in which he indicated his objections to the agreement. He objected to the clause restricting the conduct of a census of the Palestinians in Lebanon to the PLO (art.6) and to having failed to fix the number of guerrilla operations from Lebanon. In relation to the Palestinian presence, Helou's greatest concern was over giving the PLO the right to take part in the armed struggle. This meant, according to Helou, the transformation of refugee camps into military bases for the Palestinian Resistance.¹⁶⁰

Indeed, the Cairo Agreement represented a departure from the 9 May Agreement. It granted the Palestinians rights that went beyond what was needed for the guerrillas to carry out raids against Israel. The Cairo Agreement gave them freedom of political and military action wherever they were in Lebanon and not only in the border area. And they were present in 15 camps dispersed throughout the country.

Boustany's role in bringing about the agreement was the subject of political controversy. Notwithstanding the pressure put on Boustany by both Cairo and Arafat to conclude an agreement, his handling of the Cairo talks was given various interpretations. One such interpretation was linked to Boustany's presidential ambitions. The question of the presidency had surfaced a year earlier when Helou attempted resignation and Boustany was

a strong contender for the post. Although Boustany denied attempts to seek the presidency, his ambition was known to Chehabist army officers and in PLO circles.¹⁶¹ Boustany's trip to Cairo, his meeting with Nasser and his dealings with Arafat helped improve his 'Arab' credentials for the presidency, due in summer 1970. This was evident in the strong Egyptian protest against the abrupt decision by the Lebanese government to dismiss Boustany.¹⁶² He was replaced by General Jean Njaym.

Government action was justified on the grounds that Boustany had reached retirement age.¹⁶³ But according to one account the real motive behind the dismissal in January 1970 was to foil Boustany's attempts at large scale reshuffling in the army command, aimed at strengthening his hold over the army.¹⁶⁴ This, in turn, would have curtailed Chehabist influence in the Army. Boustany's intentions were known to the Deuxième Bureau officers who pressed for quick action. By then, Helou, whose relations with Boustany continued to deteriorate after the signing of the Cairo Agreement, was as willing to clip Boustany's wings as the Chehabist officers.

Enforcing the Cairo Agreement: Squaring the Circle

Many controversies have been woven around the Cairo Agreement – and for valid reasons. One way to address the controversial setting of the agreement is to place the events that culminated in its making in a broader political context. Its significance, after all, was less due to its text than to the fact that it was the culmination of a crippling government crisis, instigated and aggravated by the PLO armed presence.

In no country other than Lebanon, and in no regional order other than that of the Arab state system, would an agreement that derives its legitimacy from writing off part of the country's national sovereignty be possible. It

was an agreement by which a country relinquished part of its prerogatives and delegated authority over part of its land to external parties engaged in war with another country to help defuse an internal political crisis.

Three alternatives were available to the Lebanese government. First, the use of force against PLO guerrillas at the risk of undermining internal stability and, probably, of war. Second, the sponsorship of a Palestinian group and, consequently, the banning of others in the name of one of the many slogans associated with panArabism. Third, the adoption of a middle ground approach: a second-best alternative to weather the storm of rapidly changing internal and regional politics. The latter accommodationist approach resulted in the Cairo Agreement. The use of force in 1969 was not an option available to the Lebanese government in the absence of unambiguous Muslim support. Likewise, the second option, that is the sponsorship and control of a Palestinian faction (like in Syria and Iraq), was simply beyond the reach of the Lebanese state for several communal and political reasons.¹⁶⁵

The Cairo Agreement dealt with the three dimensions of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon: the social, the political and the military.¹⁶⁶ While the social and political were not an issue of internal dispute, the armed struggle was the core of the problem. The most important provision in the Cairo Agreement consisted of allowing PLO guerrillas unimpeded access to specified areas in the 'Arqub region and in areas along the Lebanese–Israeli border. These areas comprise three regions: the eastern sector (the 'Arqub), the central sector and the coastal Western sector. Initially, in the 'Arqub region, the guerrillas were largely autonomous; in the central sector they had limited presence, and in the coastal areas there was no PLO armed presence.¹⁶⁷

In theory, the Cairo Agreement was supposed to be implemented in accordance with the principles of the sovereignty and security of Lebanon (stated four times in the agreement).¹⁶⁸ In practice, however, it was the opposite. What the Cairo Agreement ensured was PLO sovereignty over Palestinian military affairs both inside and outside the camps. By the terms of the agreement, the Lebanese authorities would exercise their prerogatives and responsibilities in all areas of Lebanon and in all circumstances.¹⁶⁹ But this was only on paper. Since the Lebanese government was unable to

exercise its prerogatives and responsibilities prior to the signing of the agreement, when the PLO was still vulnerable and weak, it would not fare any better when the PLO 'liberated' itself from the hold of the Lebanese authorities.

The most problematic aspect of the Cairo Agreement was its enforcement. No mechanisms of enforcement were mentioned in the agreement. In times of crisis, neither the Lebanese government nor the PLO was in a position to settle their differences without the intervention of third parties. Such intervention would, in turn, add another dimension of complexity to an already difficult situation.

This brings us to the PLO reading of the Cairo Agreement. From the outset, PLO leaders operated with the assumption that the Cairo Agreement, at least from the vantage point of 1969, was a temporary arrangement aimed at ending the first major Palestinian 'uprising' in Lebanon. The momentum for the armed struggle could not be broken simply because a vague document was signed with a vulnerable Lebanese state. As Walid Khalidi explained 'the Cairo Agreement of 1969 tended to be looked upon as an acquired extraterritorial right never to be abandoned but rather to be consolidated and expanded where possible.'¹⁷⁰

For Palestinian leaders, the Cairo Agreement meant different things at different times. For Arafat and his supporters, it was the culmination of Palestinian achievements (*injazat*) since the launching of the armed struggle. Indeed, the Cairo Agreement was the first official document that Arafat had signed with the government of a state since he assumed PLO leadership. Other Palestinian organisations, such as the PFLP and Sa'iqa, regarded the Cairo Agreement as an unnecessary accommodation with an 'oppressive' and 'reactionary' Lebanese government.¹⁷¹ At best it could be rejected and at worst simply ignored.

In 1969 PLO organisations were determined to secure political and territorial autonomy in Lebanon, mobilise the Palestinian population in the camps and draw guerrilla recruits, irrespective of the consequences of their actions on Lebanon.¹⁷² From that time onward, Lebanon and the PLO were locked in a zero-sum game. As explained by Michael Hudson, 'victory for the Lebanese government was in proportion to its ability to seal off the commandos from Israeli territory and avert Israeli reprisals, but for the

commandos such an outcome would mean defeat. Lebanon's gains would be the Palestinians' losses.'¹⁷³

The Cairo Agreement: A Truce by Default In light of the confusion and uncertainty that surrounded the events leading up to the signing of the Cairo agreement, one could ask whether or not the crisis could have been avoided. To the extent that turmoil was the outcome of the drastic changes in regional politics following the 1967 war, military confrontations with the Palestinian guerrillas resulting in some agreement – be it the Cairo agreement or any other agreement – was bound to occur.

Lebanon's immediate vulnerability was more political than military. That Lebanon was not militarily prepared to confront Israel was no reason for its vulnerability, for even those Arab countries that had been engaged in warfare with Israel since 1948, and had built large armies, were no less vulnerable to Israeli attacks than Lebanon. The root cause of Lebanon's vulnerability had to do with its open political system. Commenting on the 1969 crisis, Edward Said notes that the Palestinian presence in Lebanon 'in some very fundamental way unsettled Lebanon's identity,' an identity which 'has stood for accommodation, tolerance, and especially representativeness ... In the crisis of 1969, Lebanon was a victim of its openness and its true cultural virtuosity, as well as of the absence of a strong sense of national identity.'¹⁷⁴ The effect of the Palestinian presence was to force Lebanon to adopt a position that she would have preferred to evade.¹⁷⁵

Following the April clashes Palestinian leaders began to acknowledge the presence of guerrilla bases and training centres in Lebanon.¹⁷⁶ From that time onward, Palestinian organisations openly called for the freedom of Fedayin action in the name of Lebanon's Arabism and its obligations

towards the struggle.¹⁷⁷ PLO leaders contended that so long as Israel occupied Palestinian territories, they had the right to fight Israel from Lebanon. Lebanon, however, did not want to be driven into a war of attrition with Israel over which it had no control. In short, as Michel Abu Jawdeh put it, the problem between Lebanon and the Palestinians was ‘a struggle between two just causes’.¹⁷⁸

During the seven-month crisis, Lebanon’s bargaining power vis-à-vis the PLO continued to weaken until it reached its lowest level following the renewal of clashes in October. By the end of 1969, it was in the interests of Egypt to help contain the increasingly explosive situation in Lebanon in whatever way possible. Were it not for Nasser’s intervention to bring about a settlement to the crisis, an agreement would probably have not been reached in November. At that time, Arafat and other Palestinian leaders were on good terms with Syria’s rulers who, incidentally, would have been content to see Egyptian mediation fail.¹⁷⁹ Syria’s political and military support for the PLO was instrumental in strengthening Arafat’s negotiating position both before and during the Cairo talks. Syria’s closure of the borders with Lebanon was intended to put pressure on the Lebanese government. They were not opened until after the signing of the Cairo agreement on 13 November 1969.

One reason underlying Nasser’s interest in defusing the crisis had to do with newly-proposed peace initiatives in the region. Nasser’s major preoccupation was to devise a proper response to the Rogers Plan, which was opposed by the PLO and by radical Arab regimes.¹⁸⁰ It was no mere coincidence that the October clashes in Lebanon occurred at the time of the heated debate over the Rogers Plan. Nasser was initially inclined to entertain the American initiative, and to accept it a year later. It provided a much-needed breathing space to improve Arab military capabilities and to deal more effectively with the increasingly costly war of attrition.¹⁸¹

Egyptian mediation between Lebanon and the PLO (and in 1970 between Jordan and the PLO) was dictated by regional considerations linked to the Rogers’ initiative. Nasser, who until his death viewed PLO guerrillas as playing the role of the ‘irresponsible arm’ of Arab governments,¹⁸² did not want to be drawn into side battles involving the PLO, whether in Lebanon or in Jordan.¹⁸³ Nasser supported guerrilla warfare against Israel from

Lebanon but did not tolerate attempts by Palestinian and Arab leaders to undermine his influence in Arab politics or to force him into a position not of his own choosing.¹⁸⁴

Given the prevailing internal and regional considerations, the Cairo Agreement provided relief for all parties who regarded it as a face-saving arrangement and an expedient truce short of better alternatives. For most Christian leaders, the Cairo Agreement was the 'lesser of two evils'. For Camille Chamoun, what counted were Palestinian intentions and their willingness to abide by the agreement when put to the test.¹⁸⁵ Another Christian response was that of Pierre Gemayel who saw the Cairo Agreement as 'a middle ground solution' between two divergent views on the PLO in Lebanon.¹⁸⁶ While acknowledging that military operations would eventually lead to Israeli raids, Gemayel explained that it 'would still be easier to cope with [such raids] than with a civil war between the Lebanese'.¹⁸⁷

Raymond Eddé was the only Lebanese leader who had consistently opposed the notion of *tansiq* and, subsequently, the Cairo Agreement. He never missed the opportunity to reiterate his position and to argue that such an arrangement hurt the interests of both Lebanon and the PLO.¹⁸⁸ But Eddé's views, and his call for the deployment of United Nations troops along the Lebanese-Israeli borders, went unheeded. Another strong reaction to the Cairo Agreement came from Maronite Patriarch Méouchy, who submitted a memorandum to the president in which he voiced concern over the military provisions of the agreement.¹⁸⁹

The overall Christian reaction alternated between cautious backing to strong opposition. It was also generally believed that the imbalance could be redressed with the election of a new president in 1970. Indeed, the election of Suleiman Frangiyeh, who in 1969 raised the slogan, 'my country is always right',¹⁹⁰ was viewed by many Christians as a victory for Lebanese national will.

Those who stood to benefit most from the outcome of the events that marked the stormy year of 1969 were Kamal Jumblatt, Leftist parties and, in a different way, the Sunni political establishment. Indeed, the Cairo Agreement met the demands voiced by the Sunni political and religious leadership. On the eve of the Cairo talks, Sunni Mufti Hassan Khalid

convened two meetings attended by Lebanon's leading political and religious figures and issued a statement calling for the freedom of Fedayin action.¹⁹¹ An attempt to convene a meeting by Shia cleric Musa al-Sadr in support of the guerrillas was not successful. The meeting was boycotted by two leading Shia figures, Sabri Hamadeh and Kamel al-Ass'ad.¹⁹²

Commenting on the Cairo Agreement, Jumblatt claimed credit for the victory of the progressive forces in the battle for the freedom of Fedayin action in Lebanon'.¹⁹³ Jumblatt's role was instrumental in the crisis: by playing the Lebanese government and the Palestinians off against each other, by capitalising on the Sunni position with respect to the Palestinian issue and by working closely with Damascus.¹⁹⁴

Jumblatt's appointment as minister of the interior in the new cabinet, formed after the signing of the Cairo Agreement, reflected his increasing power. The Ministry of the Interior gave Jumblatt access to direct monitoring of security matters, which involved, among other things, the implementation of the Cairo Agreement. But Jumblatt in office was different from Jumblatt the Leftist Druze leader in opposition. Jumblatt proceeded by replacing the army presence in the camps with internal security forces who were under his command. A new office dealing with Palestinian refugees was formed. It served as a liaison between the PLO and the Ministry of the Interior. While these measures ended direct control by Lebanese military authorities of the camps, they allowed more orderly regulation of the guerrillas.

Beginning in 1970, the guerrillas began to expand control over areas outside the camps in violation of the Cairo Agreement.¹⁹⁵ The display of weapons in public gatherings became a common occurrence; so were the checkpoints to search passers-by on the outskirts of the camps. Following several meetings with Arafat and other Palestinian leaders, Jumblatt reached an understanding with Palestinian organisations defining the scope of their military presence inside and outside the camps.¹⁹⁶ Palestinian leaders were hard-pressed to honour agreements made with a friend and ally like Jumblatt.¹⁹⁷ Having secured official recognition for their armed presence, a temporary accommodation with the Lebanese government was no crippling measure.

Other agreements dealing with military matters were signed in 1970 between Lebanese army officers (Lahoud, Dahdah, Khatib, A. Hamdan)¹⁹⁸ and representatives of the guerrilla organisations, particularly Fateh and Sa'iqa (Abu al-Za'im, Zuheir Mohsin). These agreements specified the movement and activities of the guerrillas in the 'Arqub region.¹⁹⁹ The January agreement specified the points of passage that could be used by the guerrillas in 'Arqub.²⁰⁰ Other agreements signed in 1970 allowed armed elements to enter Lebanon from the Syrian-Lebanese border at Masna' and gave the guerrillas autonomy in specified areas bordering Israel and allowed military personnel free passage.²⁰¹ There were other agreements that dealt with relations between Lebanese internal security authorities and PLO security units in the camps.²⁰² Outside the camps, the guerrillas were to refrain from political and military activities.

These measures, however, did not make Palestinian interpretations of the Cairo Agreement any less divergent. Arafat's statement that 'the vanquished [from the Cairo Agreement] were the hidden forces' was a deliberate attempt at vagueness. But if Arafat sought ambiguity, other Palestinian leaders were clearer. In response to a statement made by a member of Camille Chamoun's National Liberal Party, Greek Catholic Deputy Joseph Mughabghab, who stated that the Cairo Agreement was unconstitutional, Sa'iqa leader Zuheir Mohsin stressed that the number of guerrillas in Lebanon was bound to increase, for 'the Palestinians were wedded to Lebanon by the ties of destiny'.²⁰³ A few weeks after the signing of the Cairo Agreement, Arafat's close associate Abu Iyad stated that 'what was written on a piece of paper is not important. What is important is that the Palestinian revolution is here to stay'.²⁰⁴

Some Palestinian organisations either rejected the Cairo Agreement altogether or were not willing to honour its provisions.²⁰⁵ As for those organisations that showed willingness to abide by its terms, they saw it as meeting 'minimal' demands (*al-had al-adna*) in terms of their dealings with the Lebanese authorities.²⁰⁶ In the seventh convention of the Palestinian National Council held in Cairo in June 1970, Lebanon was proclaimed a 'confrontation state' (*dawlat muwajaha*) similar to those Arab countries that had territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war.²⁰⁷ This meant that PLO forces in Lebanon were now in a de facto state of war with Israel. This

confrontational stand was a drastic departure from the relatively low key posture (vis-à-vis Israel), embodied in the Cairo Agreement. A few months after its signing, the Cairo Agreement's 'secret' status was a relic of the past.

The Vanishing Agreement Nearly three weeks after the signing of the Cairo Agreement clashes between the guerrillas and the Lebanese Army were renewed in the Nabatiyyeh Palestinian camp in the south, but were quickly contained.²⁰⁸ The Cairo Agreement became gradually irrelevant. Violated from the start, it was more a cease-fire than a binding, enforceable agreement.

Acts of defiance directed against the state and its symbols helped boost Palestinian self-confidence; they gave the PLO the kind of political and moral authority it needed. For the PLO and its Lebanese supporters, there was no dearth of pretexts or occasions to demonstrate. In April 1969, it was a demonstration in support of military action; it could have been something else: the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, the partition of Palestine, a public gathering in support of one Arab regime or another, or any other occasion, be it Lebanese, Arab or Palestinian. But irrespective of the outcome of confrontations between the Lebanese authorities and the PLO, the latter stood to gain. This is because militancy gave the PLO a legitimate status: that of an official and credible rival force with all the rights and privileges attached to such a force, be it hostile or friendly, strong or weak.

Since 1969 the PLO was in search of battles to fight, events to commemorate and scapegoats behind which all Palestinian groups could rally. Any challenge to government authorities served several objectives: (i) To mobilise the Palestinian population and draw recruits to the guerrilla organisations; (ii) to attract Arab political, military and financial support; (iii) to polarise Lebanese public opinion and generate support for Lebanese groups and parties; (iv) to dictate a new course of action on the Lebanese

government and ultimately force it to make concessions; and (v) to claim a record of 'progressive' deeds in support of Lebanon's 'deprived' masses living under an 'oppressive' Lebanese state. In short, any change in the status quo offered a variety of 'fringe benefits' for the post-1967 PLO.

Conclusion

Lebanese leaders sought to end a crippling political crisis, but would have preferred a different agreement – better still, ending the crisis with no agreement. But this was not possible. Karame opted out from day one as did other potential premiers, and Helou was politically paralysed. Boustany eventually brokered the deal. In the absence of internal agreement and/or military action against the PLO, some deal had to be brokered. Post-1967 Lebanon could not escape its fate: that of being a de facto confrontation state.

The Palestinians, for their part, sought to free themselves from the hold of the Lebanese authorities and to attend to their socio-economic needs. They also sought to mobilise politically, irrespective of the degree of support they had in Lebanon. Meeting these objectives, would have been a manageable problem with limited repercussions on Lebanon. But what did cause problems and altered the nature and basis of the Palestinian presence was the arming of the refugee population and the transformation of south Lebanon into a permanent war zone with Israel.

The Cairo Agreement was an unusual document having no precedent in the annals of bilateral accords. It was neither an agreement between two enemy forces, nor an unambiguous agreement of co-operation between two friendly parties. Nor was it an agreement between two states. The Cairo Agreement could neither stop the Palestinian revolution nor alter its strategy. In time, it became largely of symbolic significance: a date of reference to indicate the first major PLO political and military breakthrough in Lebanon.

The events in 1969 marked the beginning of a complex problem: that of a diaspora Palestinian society unfolding in three overlapping layers – the refugee population, the guerrillas and the leadership – united in the desire to defeat Israel but divided on many other issues. The world that the refugee population came to know, two or three decades after the loss of Palestine, was different from that of the Fedayin, the soldiers of a revolution plagued by a factionalism which mirrored Arab divisions. The arena for the changing outlook and aspirations of Palestinian society, particularly after the Jordan war, was Lebanon.

In fewer than eight months, the PLO made great strides towards recognition and establishing a strong political and military presence in Lebanon. From the fringe of the Arab–Israeli conflict, the PLO was able to carve out a place of its own at the centre of Arab and Lebanese politics. From a token presence of a few hundred armed men, it consolidated itself as a large armed force. And from a Fateh-sponsored demonstration banned by the Lebanese government, on 23 April 1969, the Arafat-led PLO signed an agreement with the Lebanese government, which was denied access to the camps seven months later.

Notwithstanding the flaws inherent in the Cairo Agreement, it was negotiated and signed at a time when the Lebanese state still enjoyed a significant advantage over the PLO. In 1969 Lebanon had strong state institutions, a strong army and an autonomous standing in regional politics. In addition, the Cairo Agreement was brokered under relatively favourable circumstances: prior to the mobilisation of Leftist parties, prior to the political mobilisation of the Shia community, prior to the politicisation of the Lebanese Army, and prior to the Maronite-Sunni political divide within the executive over power-sharing. During the seven-month crisis no communal grievances were uttered either by the Sunni or by the Shia political and religious establishments. Political demands were confined to support for the PLO.

As for the regional scene, Lebanon in 1969 could draw on Egyptian mediation. An Arab leader of Nasser's stature and a country of Egypt's influence in Arab politics provided sufficient political clout to help find a settlement with the PLO. Also, the Cairo Agreement was concluded prior to the Jordanian–Palestinian war in 1970–71. These relatively favourable conditions for Lebanon, both in internal and regional politics, ceased to exist in the 1970s when the Cairo Agreement had to be implemented.

The Cairo Agreement was signed under a Chehabist-dominated army, nine months before the presidential election. In the 1970 election, Chehab's candidate Elias Sarkis was defeated. This was followed by the dismantling of the Chehabist establishment in the army. The question worth exploring is how relations between the Lebanese government and the PLO would have evolved had there been no regime change in 1970. This is covered in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 *Al-Nahar*, 29, 30 December 1968.
- 2 They came from the Nahr al-Barid and al-Baddawi camps in North Lebanon. See Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, pp. 143–4.
- 3 According to Avner Yaniv and Robert J. Lieber ‘the brunt of the damage’ in the Beirut airport raid of December 1968, ‘was done to Lebanese Christian-owned property’. ‘Yet set against the background of Christian reluctance to cooperate with Israel,’ the authors continue, ‘there was logic in the Israeli reprisal. This suggested that only by harming Christian interests could the Israelis force these groups into attempting to control the PLO.’ See ‘Personal Whim or Strategic Imperative? The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon’, *International Security*, vol. 8, No. 2 (Fall 1983): 122. It is important to note that the 13 airplanes destroyed by the raid were covered by an insurance policy and, as a result, no financial damage was incurred. Also Lebanon’s national carrier was not solely Christian-owned.
- 4 See Richard A. Falk, ‘The Beirut Raid and the International Law of Retaliation, *American Journal of International Law*, 63 (July 1969): 415–43.
- 5 Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, p. 125.
- 6 *Al-Nahar* 13 July 1969.
- 7 Ghassan Tuéni, *al-Nahar* (editorial), 20 December 1968.
- 8 Excerpts from unpublished memoirs of former Lebanese army commander Emile Boustany which appeared in *al-Safir*, 15 March 1997, pp. 10–11.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 Helou, vol. III, *Mémoires...*, pp. 58–60. Secret report prepared by the Sûreté Générale, No.85/SK, 21 June 1969. See also the detailed reports on the location of military bases and distribution of the guerrillas by village and organisation in the south in Helou, *Ibid.*, pp. 61–6. Secret report, No. 1329/C, 15 September 1969.
- 16 See *al-Nahar*, 22 April 1969.
- 17 Interview with Mohsin Ibrahim, 6 March 1997.
- 18 Interview with George Hawi, 7 April 1997. According to Hawi, Palestinian leaders had different views on the situation in Jordan and on the future course of Jordanian–Palestinian relations.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 *Ibid.* Its leading activists were Rafiq al-Bala'a and Rafiq Shatila.
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 *Ibid.*

- 26 Ibid. Also interview with Mohsin Ibrahim, 6 March 1997.
- 27 Hawi, Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 For details see *al-Nahar*, 23, 24, 25 April 1969. See also *al-Hayat*, 25, 26 April 1969. See text of a televised statement made by 'Adel 'Usayran entitled 'Tawdih Lilhaqa'q', on 28 April 1969.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Interview with a leading Leftist activist who witnessed the confrontation. He did not want to be identified, 4 March 1997.
- 34 Interview with George Hawi, 7 April 1997. One of the two people killed was Mustafa Dandashi.
- 35 *Al-Nahar*, 24 April 1969; Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, pp. 160–1.
- 36 Interview with Moshin Ibrahim, 6 March 1977.
- 37 'Amil, *Al-Nazariyya...*, pp. 323–41.
- 38 Ibid, pp. 326–8.
- 39 *Al-Kifah*, 25 April 1996.
- 40 *Al-Nahar*, 26 April 1996.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 *Al-Nahar*, 25, 27 April 1969.
- 43 *Al-Nahar*, 25 April 1969.
- 44 *Al-Hayat*, 26 April 1996.
- 45 Interview with Mohsin Ibrahim, 6 March 1997.
- 46 See Mukhar, 'A Study...'.
47 See the interesting account of the transformation of Palestinian society and politics in the camp of Borj al-Barajneh located near Beirut. Faisal Jalloul, *Naqd al-Silah al-Filastini. Borj al-Barajneh: Ahlan wa Thawratan wa Mukhayaman* (Beirut: Dar al-Jadid, 1994).
- 48 On the leadership, ideologies and organisational structure of Fateh, PFLP, Sa'iq, DFLP and other smaller organisations, Quandt, *The Politics...*, pp. 50–112; Sharabi, *Palestine Guerrillas...*, pp. 23–47; Aryeh Yodfat and Yuval Arnon-Ohanna, PLO, *Strategy and Tactics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981); Riad el-Rayyes and Dunia Nahas, *Guerrillas for Palestine* (London: Croom Helm, 1976). See also Gérard Chaliand, *La Résistance Palestinienne* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970): 61–103; Helou, vol. III, *Mémoires...*, pp. 91–2.
- 49 On Palestinian-Syrian relations in 1969, see Quandt, *The Politics...*, pp. 64–5; Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity*, pp. 112–21.
- 50 *Al-Nahar*, 20 April 1969.
- 51 Emile Boustany, *al-Safir*, 15 March 1997, p. 10.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 *Al-Nahar*, 7, 8 May 1969.
- 55 Ibid., 9, 10 May 1969.
- 56 Emile Boustany, *al-Safir*, 15 March 1997, p. 10.
- 57 Quoted in *al-'Amal* from the daily *Nida'al-Watan*, 10 June 1969.

- 58 *Al-Nahar*, 3 September 1969 and *Ibid.*, 8 September 1969. See also Fateh organ *Hissad al-'Asifa*, July 1969, pp. 1–4 and September 1969, pp. 1–4.
- 59 Helou, vol. III, *Mémoires...*, pp. 68–70. Secret report, No. 102/S.K., 7 March 1969.
- 60 *Ibid.*, Secret Report, 30 August 1969. There are 15 Palestinian camps in Lebanon, 5 in Beirut and its suburbs and 10 others in the south, north and the Beqa. For a brief survey of each camp, see John K. Cooley, 'The Palestinians' in *Lebanon in Crisis: Participants and Issues*, P. Edward Haley and Lewis W. Snider, (eds), (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979): 25–9. See also Leila al-Horr, vol. I, *Al-Filastiniyyun...*, pp. 15–33.
- 61 *Al-'Amal*, 30 August 1969.
- 62 *Al-Nahar*, 30 August 1969. See also *Hissad al-'Asifa*, September 1969, pp. 5–6.
- 63 *Al-Nahar*, 12 August 1969. The casualty toll was 8 dead and 21 injured. A number of reprisals occurred in August and October. See *al-Nahar*, 9 August, 9 September, 5 October 1969.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 6 September 1969.
- 65 Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, p. 208–10; *al-Nahar*, 26 October 1969.
- 66 *Ibid.*, Helou, p. 214.
- 67 See Hanna Ghosn, *Al-'Usbu' al-'Arabi*, 8 September 1969, pp. 10–13.
- 68 *Al-Nahar*, 23, 24 October 1969. For Arab reactions condemning the Lebanese government for 'suppressing' the guerrillas, See *Hissad al-'Asifa*, special issue on the events in Lebanon, October, 1969, pp. 27–33. See also *al-Hadaf*, October 25, 1969, pp. 4–5.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 23, 24, 26 October 1969. In Tripoli 14 people were killed.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 28 October 1969.
- 71 *Ibid.*, 30 October 1969. See Hanna Ghosn, *Al-'Usbu' al-'Arabi*, 10 October 1969, pp. 16–18.
- 72 Interview with General Emile Boustany, 7 January 1987.
- 73 Interview with former President Charles Helou, 16 May 1995.
- 74 Michael Hudson, 'Fedayeen are Forcing Lebanon's Hand', *Mid-East* (February 1970): 11. See also John P. Entelis, 'Palestinian Revolutionism in Lebanese Politics: The Christian Response', *The Muslim World* (October 1972): 335–51.
- 75 The notion of Zionist designs to occupy the south and to exploit Lebanon's water resources gained currency in the political debate of the 1970s. PLO military presence was viewed as necessary to 'defend the south' and to 'abort Zionist designs'. See, for example, Khalil Abu Rjeili, 'Al Matami' al-Isra'ilyya fi al-Arabi al-Lubnaniyya', *Shu'un Filastiniyya*, 14 (October 1972): 83–90.
- 76 See text in *al-Nahar*, 1 June 1969. See also speech made on 7 May, *al-Nahar*, 8 May 1969.
- 77 Kamal Jumblatt was the only leading politician reacting negatively to Helou. See *al-Nahar*, 4 June 1969. See also Michel Abu Jawdeh, *al-Nahar*, 3 July 1969. For a leftist reply to Helou, see Mahmoud Souwayd, 'Alaqa al-Azma al-Lubnaniyya Bimasa'i al-Hal', *Dirasat 'Arabiyya* 9 (July 1969): 2–5.
- 78 *Al-Nahar*, 4 June 1969.
- 79 *Ibid.*, 9 August 1969.
- 80 Text in *al-Nahar*, 1 July 1969. According to Helou, submitting the questions was a way to engage public debate on the PLO armed presence. Interview, 16 May 1995.
- 81 *Ibid.*
- 82 *Ibid.*

- 83 On Helou's political career, see Elias al-Dayri, *Mann Yassna' al-Ra'is* (Beirut: alMu'assassa al-Jami'iya Lildirasat wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', 1982): 161–218.
- 84 According to a confidant of Chehab, André Elefteriades, the choice of Helou for the presidency was justified on the basis that he enjoyed all the necessary qualities for the position, which according to Chehab were: 'Ancien diplomate au Vatican, pro-français, anti-communiste, appartenant aux écoles du 'Destour' et de 'Michel Chiha' et sans enfants pouvant travailler à plein temps'. Quoted in Adel A. Freiha, *l'Armée et l'Etat au Liban 1945–80*, (Paris: Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1980): 153.
- 85 See the account of the crisis by Hanna Ghosn, *Al- Usbu' al-'Arabi*, 26 May 1969, pp. 3–9.
- 86 *Al-Nahar*, 23 June 1969. *Al-Nahar* columnist Elias al-Dayri wrote that 'in 67 days of the crisis Karame gave 35 statements in which he said everything, but said little with substance', 30 June 1969.
- 87 Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, pp. 188–203.
- 88 Ibid., p. 191.
- 89 Ibid., pp. 191–2.
- 90 Ibid., p. 198.
- 91 Ibid., p. 199.
- 92 Ibid., p. 200.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Ibid., p. 201.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 Ibid., p. 202.
- 97 For details see *al-Nahar*, 28 October, 6 November 1969. See also Hanna Ghosn, *AlUsbu' al-Arabi*, 10 November 1969, pp. 16–18.
- 98 *Al-Nahar*, Ibid., 29 October 1969; Emile Boustany, *al-Safir*, 15 March 1997, p. 11.
- 99 *Al-Nahar*, 29 October 1969.
- 100 Ibid.
- 101 Emile Boustany, *al-Safir*, 15 March 1997, p. 11.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Emile Boustany, *al-Safir*, 18 March 1997, p. 8.
- 105 Ibid.
- 106 Ibid.
- 107 Ibid.
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 Ibid.
- 110 Interview with former President Charles Helou, 16 May 1995.
- 111 *Al-Nahar*, 6 November 1969.
- 112 See Hanna Ghosn, *Al-Usbu' Al-Arabi*, 1 September 1969, pp. 8–11 and 10 October 1969, pp. 16–18.
- 113 Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, p. 167.
- 114 Ibid.

- 115 Interview with Emile Boustany, 7 January 1987 and *al-Safir*, 15 March 1997, p. 10. In a statement made by Arafat in October 1969, he said that he held secret talks with Boustany, but gave the date in April. *Al-Nahar*, 29 October 1969.
- 116 Emile Boustany, *al-Safir*, 15 March 1997, pp. 10–11.
- 117 Ibid.
- 118 Ibid.
- 119 Ibid.
- 120 Ibid.
- 121 Ibid.
- 122 Ibid.
- 123 Ibid.
- 124 Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, p. 167.
- 125 Ibid., pp. 167–8.
- 126 See text of the 9 May agreement in Ibid., pp. 168–9.
- 127 Ibid., p. 169.
- 128 Ibid.
- 129 Ibid., p. 170.
- 130 Ibid., p. 171.
- 131 Ibid., p. 172.
- 132 Ibid., p. 240.
- 133 Ibid., pp. 241–2.
- 134 Ibid., p. 241.
- 135 Ibid., p. 244.
- 136 Ibid., pp. 245–66. The minutes of the talks were taken by Najib Sadaka and Sami alKhatib. Sadaka reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and al-Khatib to the Ministry of Defence.
- 137 Ibid., p. 253.
- 138 Ibid., p. 261.
- 139 Ibid., p. 262.
- 140 Ibid.
- 141 Ibid., p. 265.
- 142 Ibid. According to Sami al-Khatib, Nasser supported the Cairo agreement, but blamed General Fawzi and Minister Riad for being too lenient with the Fedayin. *Al-Wasat*, 19 December 1994, p. 37.
- 143 Halim Abu ‘Izzeddin, *Tilka al-Ayyam, Muzakkarat wa Zikrayat*, Part I, (Beirut: Manshurat Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida, 1982): 1148.
- 144 Ibid., p. 1150.
- 145 Ibid., p. 1151.
- 146 Ibid.
- 147 Ibid., p. 1153.
- 148 Ibid., p. 1155.
- 149 Ibid., pp. 1155–6.
- 150 Ibid., pp. 1158–9.

- 151 Ibid.
- 152 Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, p. 250.
- 153 Emile Boustany, *al-Safir*, 18 March 1997, p. 8.
- 154 Ibid.
- 155 Ibid.
- 156 Ibid.
- 157 Ibid.
- 158 Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, p. 273.
- 159 Ibid., p. 274.
- 160 Ibid., p.276.
- 161 Walid Khalidi says that Boustany was 'reassuring in his dealings with the Palestinian leadership. Interview in Beirut, 10 February 1995.
- 162 Al-Dayri, *Mann Yassna'*..., pp. 523–4. Egyptian daily *Al-Ahram* commented on Boustany's dismissal on its first page.
- 163 *Al-Nahar*, 8 January 1970. He was to reach retirement age a year later in 1971.
- 164 Al-Dayri, *Mann Yassna'*....pp. 525–33. This was confirmed by a high-ranking army officer who was familiar with the developments in 1969–70. According to this source, Boustany's aide-de-camp Johnny Abduh (who became Deuxième Bureau chief under President Sarkis) kept Deuxième Bureau officers informed about Boustany's moves.
- 165 See chapter 9: The Porous Lebanese State and the Arab State System, pp. 110–22
- 166 See text in Walid Khalidi, *Conflict...*, pp. 185–7.
- 167 Frederic C. Hof, *Galilee Divided: The Israel-Lebanon Frontier, 1916–1984* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985): 73.
- 168 Walid Khalidi. *Conflict...*, pp. 185–7.
- 169 Ibid.
- 170 Ibid., p. 80.
- 171 See *al-Hadaf*, 15 November 1969, p. 3.
- 172 Interview with Mohsin Ibrahim, 6 March 1997.
- 173 Hudson, *Fedayeen...*, p. 14.
- 174 Cited in Gordon, *Lebanon...*, pp. 225–6.
- 175 Ibid., p. 226.
- 176 *Al-Nahar*, 10 December 1969.
- 177 Ibid.
- 178 *Al-Nahar*, 24 June 1969.
- 179 Ibid, 24 June 1969.
- 180 See Mohamed Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan* (New York: The New York Times Book, 1975): 90–7.
- 181 On the Rogers Plan and Arab reactions, see Quandt, *Decade of Decisions...*, pp. 72104. See also Heikal, *The Road...*, pp. 95–7.
- 182 According to Heikal, in 1968, Nasser told Fateh leaders (Arafat, Abu Iyad, Faruq Qaddumi) that Fateh should operate independently of Arab governments, but it should co-ordinate with them. In Nasser's words: 'Why not be our Stern? Why not be our Begin? You must be our

- irresponsible arm. On that basis we will give you all the help we can', Heikal, *The Road...*, p. 64. For a scathing critique of the 'official' Egyptian policy toward the Palestinian Resistance in 1969, see Sadiq al-'Azam, 'Al-Muqawama al-Musallaha walMawaqif al-Haikaliyya', in Munif al-Razzaz, et al., *Durus Min al-Hazima* ('Amman: Manshurat Maqtabat 'Amman, 1969): 39–78.
- 183 Interview with Mohsin Ibrahim, 6 March 1997.
- 184 When accused of 'betrayal' by Palestinian leaders, following his acceptance of the Rogers Plan, Nasser shut down the Cairo-based Voice of Palestine Radio. Abu Iyad, *My Home...*, p. 88.
- 185 See Camille Chamoun's statement in *al-Nahar*, 14 November 1969.
- 186 *Lissan al-Hal*, 12 November 1969.
- 187 Ibid.
- 188 *Al-Nahar*, 6 May 1969; 4, 6 November 1969.
- 189 Ibid., 13 December 1969.
- 190 The slogan was the title of an article written by Frangiyeh, and published in *al-Nahar*, 15 May 1969.
- 191 Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, pp. 218–19.
- 192 Ibid., p. 220.
- 193 *Al-Nahar*, 8 November 1969.
- 194 Ibid., 18 May 1969. Upon returning from a visit to Syria, Jumblatt accused Lebanese authorities of provoking conflict with the Palestinians. As *al-Nahar* commented, 'once again, Jumblatt does not say what he personally thinks, but reveals what others [Syria] think but without saying it', 19 May 1969.
- 195 Ibid., 12 January 1970.
- 196 Ibid., 19 and 21 January 1970.
- 197 One example of Palestinian defiance occurred in December 1969, when heavy gunfire was triggered during the funeral procession of a guerrilla. The cortège passed through the Christian quarter of Gemmayzeh in East Beirut, where the Kataeb party had supporters. This was clearly a provocation, for Gemmayzeh was miles away from a Palestinian camp or a cemetery. The understanding reached with Jumblatt stipulated that funeral processions would be confined in or around Palestinian camps and demonstrations would have to be licensed by city mayors. See *al-Nahar*, 15 January 1970.
- 198 Annie Laurent et Antoine Basbous, *Guerres Secrètes au Liban* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987): 33.
- 199 Accords dated 27 January, 7 March, 9 April 1970. Laurent and Basbous, Ibid., pp. 335; Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, pp. 290–5.
- 200 20 points of passage were specified, according to Laurent and Basbous, *Guerres Secrètes...*, p. 33.
- 201 Ibid.
- 202 Accords dated 4 February and 28 May 1970. Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, p. 80.
- 203 Greek Catholic deputy, Joseph Mughabghab, was one of the staunchest critics of the Cairo agreement. The Shouf deputy and a political ally of Chamoun, stated that the Cairo agreement was unconstitutional. *Al-Nahar*, 4 January 1970.
- 204 Cited in Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, p. 318 (December 1969).
- 205 The PFLP did not officially recognise the Cairo Agreement. See *al-Nahar*, 26, 27 November 1969.
- 206 Ibid., 11 January 1970.

207 Ibid., 4 January 1970.

208 Ibid., 21 November 1969, casualty toll: 5 guerrillas killed and 24 injured, of whom were 6 Lebanese army soldiers. See also the al-Sa'iqa organ, *Al-Tala 'i'*, 23 November 1968, pp. 2–3.

13

The Limits to State Power

Chehabism and the PLO

Questions have always surfaced when discussing Chehabism and the breakdown in the 1970s. Had the Chehabists not been defeated in the presidential election in 1970, would it have been possible to prevent the breakdown? Had Chehab been a candidate for the presidency and had he been elected, could Lebanon have been spared war? Assuming that reforms associated with Chehab would have continued, could he or the Chehabist-controlled army have been able to force the PLO to abide by the Cairo Agreement? Before addressing these questions a word on Chehabism and its place in the political process is necessary.

Chehabism and the Political Process Originally a term coined by one of Lebanon's leading journalists, Georges Naccache,¹ Chehabism was given various interpretations until it became a cliché to extol a better past, devoid of substance, particularly when discussed in the context of post-1975 Lebanon.

Chehabism was neither a party nor an organised political movement. Rather, it was a reformist approach to Lebanese society and politics.² It emerged out of the turmoil of 1958 and gained legitimacy and momentum under the effective leadership of President Fouad Chehab (1958–64). Chehabism meant a pragmatic, moderate adaptation of the 1943 National Pact. It was also the driving force for large scale administrative reforms and socio-economic development. Chehabism, writes Michael Hudson, was ‘Lebanon’s equivalent of the New Deal ... a moderate welfare ideology tailored to the Lebanese situation’.³ As Leonard Binder states, Chehabism was ‘a new sort of non-ideological ideology’.⁴

Chehabism was Lebanon’s first serious attempt at etatism: the state at the centre of the country’s political and economic life. Lebanon’s problem, writes Naccache, ‘is to prove that liberty is not necessarily a negation of the state’⁵ and ‘Chehabism is ... a supreme endeavour to prove just that – to restore a collective direction for the nation’.⁶ Chehabism was the deed of one man who ‘personified power’, of a ‘father who assumed the destiny of a people (of an Adenauer or a de Gaulle)’.⁷ But Naccache does not fail to warn that ‘the fatal error is to assume that one man can indefinitely be the substitute for the nation, particularly when special circumstances have made Chehab ‘l’homme providentiel.’ All the more so, when Chehab himself, continues Naccache, believes that there can be no indefinite ‘homme providentiel’.⁸

An aristocrat by birth and an army officer by training, Chehab's approach to politics was unique among Lebanon's politicians as well as among Arab military officers. Although a graduate of the same military academy under French rule which produced the first generation of Arab officers who drove their country to military dictatorships (for example, Syrian officers Husni al-Za'im and Adib alShishakli in the late 1940s and early 1950s), Chehab always kept a distance from the repressive and corrupting temptations of politics. By not mixing military professionalism with politics, he was the wise politician of the military. And by not imposing the visions of the military on society, he was the reformist military man of political institutions. Such a combination was a rarity not only in Lebanon and the Arab world, but also in many Third World countries in the post-independence era.

The survival of Chehabism both as a force for change and as a reformist ideal was very much a function of Chehab's leadership and control over state institutions. The heyday of Chehabism was during Chehab's six-year presidential term. This is when comprehensive administrative reforms were introduced and the process of institution-building was initiated. That Chehab was the quintessential professional military man and the most reform-minded leader in Lebanon was no mere coincidence. The process of balancing state authority and reform was the key element behind the success of the Chehab regime. A minimal dose of authoritarianism was inevitable in the process, something Lebanese politicians were not accustomed to tolerating.

Chehab's approach in dealing with the country's political problems led to the implementation of a more balanced regional development, the building of an efficient state bureaucracy, and the launching of long-term planning. 'The virtue of Shihabism,' observes Elizabeth Picard, 'was to get the state to attack inequalities, and it made extraordinary progress in many areas, particularly in building up the country's infrastructure.'⁹

Chehabism, to be sure, was not problem-free. Indeed, it had an inherent handicap: the lack of grassroots support for the elitist politics associated with the Chehabist establishment. Chehab did not engage in populist politics. Nor did Chehabism succeed in moving the masses. Chehab himself

had the greatest disdain for politicians, whom he contemptuously called '*fromagistes*'.

Friend and foe alike acclaimed Chehab's reformist politics. The reformist drive continued, unimpeded by the aborted coup by the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in December 1961. But the coup had other repercussions: it increased Chehab's dependence on the army and on its security apparatus, known as the *Deuxième Bureau*. This led to an inevitable development: the increasing 'politicisation' of the army.¹⁰ But even at the height of the *Deuxième Bureau*'s meddling in politics, it looked more like an unfinished exercise in high-handed politics when compared with 'The institutions of violence' perfected by the military establishments of many Arab regimes and their ruthless intelligence networks.¹¹

A mild form of 'military rule', Chehabism was defeated at the polls when Elias Sarkis lost the 1970 presidential election by a margin of one vote. This occurred at a time when Chehabist army officers commanded significant power both within and outside the military and their acceptance of defeat was an act of faith in democratic politics maintained by Chehab himself.¹²

Chehabism was also identified with President Charles Helou's term. Helou was Chehab's candidate for the presidency in 1964, but Chehabism as a model of reform congruent with Chehab's outlook lost momentum during Helou's term. One year after taking office, Helou was no longer on good terms with Chehab.¹³ During Helou's term, reforms were stalled and Chehabism came to be identified with the excesses of the *Deuxième Bureau*.

While Chehabism suffered a partial political setback in the 1968 parliamentary elections, what really brought about its demise was not so much the opposition as Chehab's unwillingness to run for the presidency in 1970. In the 1968 election a coalition was formed known as the Tripartite Alliance (*al-hilf al-thulathi*). It grouped three Maronite leaders: Camille Chamoun, Raymond Eddé and Pierre Gemayel. While the 'Hilf' defeated Chehabist candidates in some electoral districts, particularly in Mount Lebanon, it was little effective once the election ended. Initially, the 'Hilf' was the idea of Shia deputy Kazem al-Khalil, the vice-president of Chamoun's National Liberal Party.¹⁴ It was viewed by some as part of a strategy to weaken Nasserite influence in Lebanon following the 1967

war.¹⁵ In reality, however, the 'Hilf' was a short-lived electoral coalition aimed at defeating the Chehabists. It did not operate as a cohesive parliamentary bloc and had little staying power. Its three Maronite leaders were potential presidential candidates running not only against Chehab or a Chehabist candidate but also against one another.

The 1968 election was typical opposition politics, similar to any election in a competitive political system where opposition leaders and parties would mobilise resources and make alliances, incompatible as they might be, to defeat the regime and/or the ruling party. But despite the efforts of the opposition, had Chehab been a candidate in the 1970 presidential election, instead of nominating Elias Sarkis, he would have won. If Sarkis was defeated by a margin of one vote, Chehab could certainly have secured that single vote.¹⁶

The only issue on which the three 'Hilf' leaders were in agreement was opposition to Chehabism. In the late 1960s, this meant opposition to the Deuxième Bureau and not to Chehab's policies of reform which, by then, were already stalled. In fact, two pillars of the 'Hilf', Eddé and most notably Gemayel,¹⁷ were strong supporters of Chehab and his policies during his term in office and were two of the four-member cabinet formed immediately after the 1958 crisis. But the situation changed, particularly for Raymond Eddé, following his defeat in the 1964 parliamentary elections – a defeat which he blamed on the Deuxième Bureau. In the late 1960s, opposition to the Bureau was widening and included influential leaders from all communities, notably Sa'eb Salam, Kamel al-Ass'ad, Joseph Skaff and Ghassan Tuéni. Tuéni's influential daily *al-Nahar* led a systematic press campaign against Chehab and the Chehabist establishment.

Chehabism Versus the PLO in the 1970s: The Built-in Limits to State Power

In the late 1950s, Chehab was the 'indispensable man' to lead the country out of the crisis.¹⁸ A decade later, Lebanon was again in crisis, albeit of a different kind. The new crisis involved a revolutionary movement in full political

and military momentum, as opposed to a populist political current identified with Nasserism. Had Chehab been in office in the 1970s he would have been unable to influence Lebanon's political landscape the way he did in the first half of the 1960s. This is because the favourable internal and external circumstances giving Chehab a free hand in internal politics in the aftermath of the 1958 crisis were no longer present in the 1970s.

Internally, Chehab did not derive power from a large base of popular support, but rather from the work of a dedicated and enlightened elite which subscribed to a long-term reformist vision of Lebanese society.¹⁹ The reformist drive, added to the particular circumstances of the 1958 crisis, helped to neutralise the opposition. In addition, regional politics facilitated Chehab's task in the first half of the 1960s. Chehab's working relationship with Nasser, helped to detach internal politics from inter-Arab feuds, notably those between Cairo and Damascus,²⁰ and kept Lebanon outside the polarisation of regional power-balancing. This in turn enhanced Chehab's power and broadened his field of action. The concurrence of these two factors – Lebanese support and the absence of regionally-generated destabilising forces affecting internal politics – could be reproduced in the 1970s by neither Chehab nor any other politician enjoying Chehab's support.

The most unfavourable developments facing Chehab or any other president in the 1970s were the death of Nasser in 1970 and the rise of a militant PLO after 1967. In the 1960s, Nasserism was a balancing force in the face of other pan-Arab currents, particularly Syria's Ba'thists. In the 1970s, however, no such balancing force existed. No Arab leader commanded the authority and the popularity that Nasser had, particularly prior to 1967.

More importantly, if Nasser was not able to end the conflict in Jordan between King Hussein and the PLO in 1970, he was in no better position to end a similar confrontation pitting the PLO against Lebanon's non-authoritarian state. Nasser's task would have been all the more difficult in Lebanon as the PLO grew stronger, was better organised and more established, politically and militarily, than a few years earlier, when it clashed with the Hashemite regime. Indeed, it was unlikely that Nasser would have been willing to clash with the PLO for the sake of Lebanon's sovereignty and stability. After all, Nasser and his military commanders, as explained earlier, supported guerrilla operations against Israel from Lebanon, as stated in the Cairo Agreement. After 1967, Lebanon was viewed by Egypt and by other Arab countries as a de facto confrontation state.

Had Nasser lived longer, he would have been busy preparing for war to recover Egyptian territory lost in the 1967 war. This would have been his major preoccupation, not Lebanon's stability. Lebanon's utility as Egypt's ally in inter-Arab politics, as was the case in the 1960s, ceased to carry weight after 1967. At best, he would have pressed for restraint, as Sadat did following the 1973 clashes between the PLO and the Lebanese Army. And should Nasser wage war, as Sadat did in 1973 or at some other date, he would have been busy dealing with the repercussions of war with Egypt and not with the repercussions of PLO military activities on Lebanon.

Most aware of the changing scene beginning in the late 1960s, and of the problems that greatly constrained presidential power, was Chehab himself. In a statement made to explain his refusal to run for the 1970 presidential election, Chehab outlined the problems he would be facing as head of state. Three were stressed: political institutions, electoral laws and the economic system.²¹ Of these, Chehab highlighted problems linked to political institutions. For Chehab, 'Lebanon's political institutions and the principles traditionally applied in politics were no longer adequate to place Lebanon at the level needed to cope with the demands in 1970 and in different sectors. Our institutions fall behind modern systems, particularly with respect to the strengthening of the effectiveness of government authority.'²²

According to Chehab's close associate, former Foreign Minister Fouad Boutros, what Chehab was referring to in his statement was the lack of

sufficient power to deal effectively with the problem of the Palestinian armed presence which had continued to aggravate since the signing of the Cairo Agreement.²³ Boutros, who drafted Chehab's statement, asserts that Chehab was convinced that, short of using force, government authorities would not be able to curb the PLO and force it to abide by the Cairo Agreement. And short of unequivocal Muslim backing, particularly from the Sunni political establishment, and specifically from the prime minister, the use of force would not have been possible.²⁴ Since such support was not forthcoming, as was the case during the seven-month crisis in 1969, Chehab was unwilling to take the risk and probably fail in his task as president.²⁵ Instead, he opted for a second best alternative: to support the candidacy of a long-time trusted associate, Elias Sarkis, then the governor of the Central Bank and a man with a reputation for integrity.

But before making a final decision regarding his candidacy for the presidency, Chehab sought to get the political backing of Sunni leaders over the handling of PLO military pressure. A meeting called by Rashid Karame and other pro-Chehab politicians, was held at the Carlton Hotel in Beirut a few weeks prior to the presidential election. Fouad Boutros, who was charged by Chehab to attend the meeting, reiterated Chehab's refusal to run and stressed his position on the problem of the PLO armed presence.²⁶ Karame and other Muslim leaders could not make a commitment on that issue.²⁷ Boutros conveyed their position to Chehab.

According to Charles Helou, Chehab opposed giving the PLO permanent military bases in Lebanon, as stated in the Cairo Agreement.²⁸ So did Chehabist officers, who were instrumental in the sacking of army commander Emile Boustany. Chehab must have realised that if no Muslim backing for army intervention was forthcoming from an established and trusted leader such as Rashid Karame, the situation would be much worse when the premiership was in the hands of a more vulnerable Sunni politician having to deal with a stronger PLO. In the first half of the 1970s, the most any president could achieve, be it Chehab or any other leader, was some form of accommodation in the face of political and security challenges emanating from three sources: PLO military operations, Israeli attacks and pressure by Arab regimes.

In the same vein, the rise of a militant PLO and the wide popular support it received in Lebanon and in the Arab world were not a function of domestic politics or internal problems in any of the countries concerned. During the 1969 crisis no statements were made by Muslim or Leftist leaders in relation to socio-economic issues and reforms of the political system. Demands centred on the support and protection of the Palestinian Resistance. And in the 1970s, no formula of reform could have been devised to satisfy all parties, the Muslim establishment and the Jumblatt-led Left.

Ultimately, neither Chehabism nor any other reformist drive could have reversed the disintegration process in the 1970s. As Michael Hudson observed: PLO guerrillas represented a challenge not only to Lebanon's liberal-bourgeois ideology but also to the military-reformist ideology of the Chehabists'.²⁹ Had reforms been implemented by Chehab or by others, would this have translated into national consensus in favour of the use of force to curtail the PLO? Would such reforms have been sufficient to make Muslim leaders, Jumblatt and the Left, for example, refrain from supporting the PLO? In fact, when Chehab was in power and when Jumblatt was a political ally, he never refrained from criticising Chehab's policies, even when he was in government. As for Leftist thinkers, Chehabism was viewed as a 'bourgeois current representing the interests of the bourgeois state'.³⁰ Leftist parties regarded Chehab's reforms in the 1960s as a conservative attempt which reproduced the confessional system and was largely a failure.³¹ Nor did Chehab's pro-Nasser policy satisfy Arab nationalists. For them, Chehabism amounted to a shy identification with Arab causes, which fell short of their aspirations for Arab unity and revolutionary change.³²

Political reforms would not have stopped the slide to anarchy. What was needed to contain turmoil, particularly the cycle of violence generated by PLO-Israeli warfare, was perhaps a measure of 'healthy authoritarianism'.³³ Following the confrontations between the Lebanese army and PLO forces in 1973, the use of force to contain the guerrillas was ruled out – this time by President Frangiyeh who, unlike Helou, did not lack the determination to use force. The problem after 1969 was not only over military issues; it was also political. So was its settlement or lack thereof.

Whether it was Chehab,³⁴ Frangiyeh, or any other president opting for military action against the PLO, the reaction of the opposition would not have been different. After all, the longest political crisis since independence took place in 1969 when the Lebanese army was still strong, and the Cairo Agreement was signed when the Chehabist establishment was still in control. Also, the reaction of Syria or that of other Arab regimes would have been no different. No Arab regime would have tolerated, let alone supported a presidential decision to use force against the PLO.

Had Chehab himself been in office in the late 1960s, he would have had to deal with the problems which emerged in relation to the armed struggle and to Arab support for it. Chehab in power would not have made Arafat alter his strategy, nor would he have altered Nasser's priorities, which changed from the pre-1967 period. In the end, the internal and external circumstances in the first half of the 1970s were far more explosive and less conducive to political settlement than those prevailing in the late 1950s, when Chehab took office, or in the late 1960s had he been president.

Notes

- 1 Georges Naccache, 'Un Nouveau Style: Le Chehabisme', *Cénacle Libanais* (November 1960): 9–35.
- 2 See Kamal S. Salibi, 'Lebanon Under Fuad Chehab, 1958–1964', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2 (April 1966): 211–26; Pierre Rondot, 'Quelques Réflexions sur l'Expérience Politique du 'Chéhabisme' au Liban, *Orient* 16 (1960): 43–50. See also Hudson, *The Precarious Republic...*, pp. 279–335; Basim al-Jisr, *Ri'asa ... wa Siyasa wa Lubnan al-Jadid* (Beirut: Dar Maktabat al-Hayat, 1964): 13–25.
- 3 Hudson, *The Precarious Republic...*, p. 297.
- 4 In Binder (ed.), *Politics in Lebanon*, p. 309.
- 5 Naccache, *Un Nouveau Style...*, p. 35.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid., pp. 14–16.
- 8 Ibid., p. 35.
- 9 Elizabeth Picard, *Lebanon. A Shattered Country* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1996): 90–1.
- 10 Interview with former Foreign Minister Fouad Boutros, 21 November 1996. See also Louis al-Hajj, *Min Makhzun al-Zakira* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 1993): 57–8.
- 11 See, for example, al-Khalil, *Republic of Fear...*, pp. 3–45.
- 12 Interview with Fouad Boutros, 21 November 1996.
- 13 Chehab accused Helou of supporting Raymond Eddé in the by-election of 1965 against Chehabist candidate, the widow of the deceased deputy Antoine So'aid. Interview with President Helou, 16 May 1995.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Leftist parties and leaders were intent on giving the 1968 election an ideological interpretation and on attributing the demise of Chehabism to the Tripartite Alliance and to its 'anti-Arab', pro-Western and 'imperialist' designs.
- 16 Interview with Fouad Boutros, 21 November 1996. According to Boutros, Jumblatt opposed Elias Sarkis' candidacy. See also General Ahmad al-Hajj, *al-Nahar* 21 October 1995. According to al-Hajj, who was a close associate of Chehab, candidate Suleiman Frangiyeh charged him to convey a message to Chehab that he would withdraw his candidacy and support him if he ran for the presidency and not Elias Sarkis.
- 17 See Picard, *Lebanon...*, p. 91.
- 18 Naccache, *Un Nouveau Style...*, pp. 26–7.
- 19 Many of those who worked closely with Chehab were associated with the Beirut-based 'think tank', Le Cénacle Libana is, founded and headed by Michel al-Asmar.
- 20 See Michel Abu Jawdeh, *Al-Watan al-Saghir wa al-Dawr al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 1993): 198–209.
- 21 See text of Chehab's statement translated into French and English in Joseph G. Chami and Gérard Castoriades, *Days of Tragedy Lebanon* 75–76 (Nicosia: Printco, 1977): 8–9.
- 22 Ibid.

- 23 Interview with Fouad Boutros, 21 November 1996.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Interview with former President Charles Helou, 16 May 1995.
- 29 Hudson, 'Fedayeen...', p. 14. See also Nissim Rejwan, 'Lebanon and the Guerrillas', *Midstream*, December 1968, pp. 15–21.
- 30 See 'Amil, *Al-Nazariyya...*, pp. 303–23.
- 31 See, for example, the essays put out by the organisation of 'Lebanese Socialists' written in 1967 and 1968 in *Al-'Amal al-Ishtiraki wa Tanaqudat al-Wad' al-Lubnani* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1969).
- 32 Interview with Munah al-Solh, 20 September 1994. Also interview with Mohammad Kishli, 17 March 1994.
- 33 Harry Eckstein, 'Theoretical Approaches to Explaining Collective Political Violence', in Ted Robert Gurr (ed.), *Handbook of Political Conflict: The Theory and Research* (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1980): 135–66.
- 34 Chehab died on 25 April 1973. His death, which coincided with the Israeli raid on Beirut and the subsequent confrontations between the PLO and the Lebanese army, would have left a vacuum at the centre of power. This in turn would have aggravated the situation and would have weakened the position of the Lebanese government vis-à-vis the PLO.

PART V

The Political Process: Internal and External Dimensions, 1970–1974

The Years of Uncertainty, 1970–1972

Contrary to the buoyant years which characterised PLO politics in the immediate aftermath of the 1967 defeat, the period 1970–72 was that of ‘revolutionary maturity’. Of particular concern to the PLO was the changing Arab political scene in the early 1970s. The PLO had to fight battles for survival on two fronts: military confrontations with the Jordanian army in 1970–71, and political battles to wrest the occupied territories from Hashemite control.

On the military front, the guerrillas lost the war in July 1971, when the Jordanian army carried out its final assault on PLO strongholds.¹ While the elimination of PLO armed presence in Jordan was facilitated by internal and regional circumstances working in favour of the Hashemite monarch, political control over the occupied territories was a more difficult undertaking. King Hussein’s attempts to include the occupied territories within the framework of a United Arab Kingdom, and thus deny the PLO the right to represent the Palestinian people both inside and outside Palestine, were not successful.

The Jordan war was a devastating blow to the PLO. Unlike the corporate Arab defeat in the 1948 and 1967 wars, the Jordan debacle was strictly Palestinian. The aftermath of the Jordan war was a time of reassessment and discord within a deeply shaken PLO. In a matter of days, it found itself once again at the mercy of Arab regimes.² The divisions and ideological differences which had characterised Palestinian politics after 1967 were brought to the fore.

Palestinian response to the Jordan defeat was revenge (*al-tha'r*) against those who sought to 'liquidate the revolution'. Contrary to previous reactions to defeat, particularly after the 1948 war, which consisted of verbal attacks against 'the generation of defeat', the PLO in the early 1970s possessed sophisticated and greatly damaging instruments of retaliation and revenge. The PLO resorted to 'organised terrorism' in 1971–72. 'The shadow war', as it was labelled by Abu Iyad,³ targeted not only Israel but also Arab regimes. The novelty in this organised underground violence was the involvement of Fateh through Black September.⁴ The latter claimed responsibility for a number of operations, notably the assassination of Jordanian prime minister Wasfi al-Tal on 28 November 1971, while attending an Arab Defence Council meeting in Cairo.⁵

As Black September carried out operations against selective targets, other organisations, notably the PFLP, were engaged in spectacular raids against Israeli targets. These raids were also intended to attract world attention to the Palestinian cause. The escalation of political violence – to which Israel responded in kind both inside and outside the occupied territories – was an integral part of the PLO's decision to go 'underground' in the immediate aftermath of the Jordan war. Moreover, internal Palestinian rivalries provided additional impetus for the proliferation of random and, at times self-damaging, violent acts. For those organisations having a small popular base and limited resources, a well-executed and daring operation helped increase their popularity and enhanced their prestige and standing.

In 1972 the debate within the PLO centred on which approach to pursue in conducting guerrilla warfare. Fateh advocated a tactical retreat to covert operations (*siriyyat al-'amal al-fida'i*). But there was little agreement within the PLO regarding future moves to consolidate Palestinian ranks and hasten the recovery from the Jordan war.

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat dubbed 1972 'the year of decision'. After Jordan, the Palestinians had a 'year of decision' of their own during which they had to develop a new strategy. The 'teenage years' of the late 1960s, when the PLO could afford occasional blunders, were over. The revolution was launched and was crippled in Jordan. But there was a refuge. This was Lebanon, where the PLO had a new lease of life.

Palestinian–Lebanese Relations after the Cairo Agreement: 1970–71

Despite Arab support for the PLO and the international attention it was able to generate, the PLO would not have been able to operate as an autonomous movement in the absence of the sanctuary it found in Lebanon. The autonomy it enjoyed in Lebanon could not be found in any other Arab country. In the years following the loss of its Jordan base, the PLO came to view its Lebanon base in strategic terms. As a result, Lebanon was no longer a place where the PLO would be content with limited political and military presence.

In the early 1970s, Palestinian organisations displayed little willingness to abide by agreements, which in reality were no more than hasty deals mirroring the balance of power of the late 1960s. If a greements made among Arab ‘brothers’ were not honoured, and if relations between them were stormy, what then could be said of relations between enemies, namely, between Israel and the Palestinians in Lebanon?

Beginning in 1970, Palestinian–Israeli raids in the south intensified, as did the clashes between the Lebanese Army and the guerrillas. One of the early clashes after the Cairo Agreement occurred in March 1970 in the south, resulting in several casualties.⁶ Violence began to drive local inhabitants to seek shelter outside their villages, particularly in the suburbs of Beirut.

Demonstrations were held in Beirut to protest the policies of the Lebanese government towards ‘Arab causes’ and the Palestinian revolution. The confusing setting of Arab politics was clearly apparent in the slogans the demonstrators raised, comparing President Helou to Nuri al-Sa'id, Iraq's strong man under the Hashemite monarchy, and calling for his overthrow. This led the Beirut daily *al-Nahar* to comment: ‘if all Arab presidents were to meet Nuri's fate, would this mean that Israel's fate would be similar to that of Nuri’.⁷

A serious confrontation involving PLO guerrillas occurred in March 1970. Clashes began in the Maronite town of Kahhaleh and spread immediately to the outskirts of Beirut. While disturbances lasted only three days, they had unprecedented confessional overtones.

The incident began on 25 March, following an exchange of gunfire between Palestinians escorting a convoy of cars passing through the

Christian town of Kahhaleh (located on the major Beirut-Damascus road) on their way to Damascus to bury a Palestinian commando officer.⁸ On their way back, the Palestinian convoy, which was larger and more heavily armed than the previous one, came under heavy fire as it passed through the main road in the town. Gunfire went on for forty-five minutes and resulted in several casualties.⁹

Immediately after the incident, attempts at reconciliation began. Jumblatt, in his capacity as minister of the interior, conferred with delegations representing the Palestinians and representatives of the inhabitants of Kahhaleh. Despite these efforts, fighting spread to other areas around Palestinian camps in the areas of Dikwaneh and Harit Hreik. In these two localities, largely populated by Christians of lower and middle class backgrounds, the guerrillas had already begun to expand their military presence outside the camps, where they would set up roadblocks and harass passers-by. In Dikwaneh, where the Tal-Za'tar camp was located, Palestinian guerrillas raided a local office of the Kataeb Party. But more importantly they kidnapped Pierre Gemayel's younger son, Bashir, who, at the time, was not yet directly involved in party politics. Although Gemayel, along with his two companions, were released the same day from a Fateh office on Hamra street,¹⁰ the symbolic significance of the episode was clear, as Kataeb Party members were implicated in the Kahhaleh incident.

Clashes spread to Beirut's southern suburbs – Borj al-Barajneh, Harit Hreik and Shiyah. They went on for two consecutive days and involved confrontations between the guerrillas and Lebanese security forces.¹¹ Four members of the internal security forces were kidnapped in Shiyah.¹² In an apparent retaliation for the Kahhaleh shooting, guerrillas from the Borj al-Barajneh camp attacked the civilian population in the largely Christian locality of Harit Hreik. Six people were killed and eighteen injured.¹³ There was no trace of gunfire in the camp since no shooting came from the civilian population.¹⁴ Agreement was reached through Libyan mediation between the Fedayin and the Kataeb.¹⁵ Almost three weeks later, Jumblatt ordered Internal Security forces to conduct a search for weapons caches in Kahhaleh. No heavy weapons were found, but 150 people were detained.¹⁶ These arrests were strongly condemned by Pierre Gemayel and Camille Chamoun, who had many supporters in the town.

While the crisis was quickly contained, it was indicative of the kind of radicalism and communal tensions PLO armed presence was generating in the country. For the inhabitants of Kahhaleh, the display of Palestinian military presence in civilian areas, away from the battlefield with Israel, was regarded as an act of defiance serving no purpose other than to intimidate the civilian population.

This attitude was shared not only by Christians but also by the Shia and the Druze, particularly in the south, where villagers bore the brunt of Palestinian Israeli confrontations. One of the first signs of discontent appeared as early as May 1969 in Hasbaya, Marja'youn and in other areas in south Lebanon. Demonstrations were held to protest PLO conduct and to express support for the Lebanese army.¹⁷ At that time, spontaneous popular opposition to uncontrolled PLO armed presence was not linked to internal Lebanese politics or to regional conflicts. Rather, people reacted to a perceived security threat triggered by guerrilla activities.

No sooner had these disturbances ended than military confrontations began in the south. PLO shelling of northern Israel provoked indiscriminate Israeli retaliation. On 12 May 1970, the Israeli army clashed with the Lebanese army and the guerrillas and took a number of Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners.¹⁸ Syria seized the opportunity to send troops to the 'Arqub region and claimed that it was defending Lebanon from Israeli aggression.¹⁹ A few days later, Israel resumed shelling of southern villages, following a Fedayin operation inside Israel. This round of fighting resulted in a high casualty toll among the combatants and among the civilian population which was the target of Israel's Napalm bombs.²⁰

These heavy raids provoked the first large exodus of civilians, mainly Shia, to the already dense suburbs of Beirut.²¹ Calls for the defence of the south and for its reconstruction and development became more audible. Among those who called for a more forceful action to defend the south was Shia cleric Musa al-Sadr. On 26 May, in response to Sadr's call, a general strike took place and massive demonstrations were held in Beirut. The slogans raised emphasised the need to improve the defence of the south and criticised the ineffectiveness of the Lebanese government.²² These acts of protest were not without concrete results. Soon afterwards, a new government funded body, known as the Council of the South, was formed with the objective of attending to the problems of the south. Maurice

Gemayel, a Kataeb deputy and former minister of planning, was chosen to head the Council of the South. Gemayel, who had close ties with Sadr and was a long-time associate of President Chehab, died five months later in October 1970.

Capitalising on Sadr, whose influence in Shia politics was on the rise, Shia leader Kamel al-Ass'ad, for his part held his own gathering on 14 June in the southern town of Nabatiyyeh. He gave the government a two-week ultimatum to take effective defence measures in the south before resorting to forceful action.²³

These events revived the political debate regarding PLO compliance with the Cairo Agreement. The Lebanese government stressed that PLO shelling of Israel from Lebanon and the broadening of guerrilla operations without prior co-ordination with the Lebanese Army violated the Cairo Agreement. Jumblatt, who was charged to work out a settlement with the guerrillas, concluded an agreement with the PLO representative in Lebanon, Shafiq al-Hout. It consisted of curbing the public display of weapons by the guerrillas in non-military areas. The agreement, however, did not stop artillery shelling from Lebanese territory.²⁴ Nearly four weeks later, al-'Assifa, the military wing of Arafat's Fateh, shelled the settlement of Kiryat Shmona in northern Israel.²⁵

Periodic PLO-related military incidents continued. One such incident took place in Sidon between a local Nasserite organisation headed by Ma'ruf Sa'd and guerrillas from the nearby 'Ayn al-Helweh camp. Sa'd was detained in the camp and the offices of his Nasserite organisation were closed. A general strike was observed and local leaders called for the shutdown of guerrilla offices in the city.²⁶

Moreover, in an effort to consolidate its presence in Lebanon, Fateh put out a plan in 1970 to make efficient use of the camps in Beirut and in suburbs in crisis situations.²⁷ Among the camps located in Christian areas, Tal-Za'tar was the largest and the most important both as a political and military base. Its functions included the following: (i) to recruit workers from nearby factories in Dikwaneh and Mkallis for the Lebanese branch of Fateh. The person in charge of this operation was 'Ali al-Asmar. He was also the workers' representative in the 'Cortina' ice cream factory; (ii) to purchase apartments in Dikwaneh and use them as surveillance posts; (iii) to link Tal-Za'tar logistically to the nearby smaller camp of Jisr al-Basha and establish

military control over the crossing of Mkalles, and (iv) To link Tal-Za'tar to the nearby area of Nab'a inhabited by Shia, where Palestinian and Leftist organisations were active.

The Dbayeh camp, located near the largely Christian city of Jounieh and inhabited mainly by Palestinian Christians, had no important military functions. It was used as a surveillance and intelligence post within the Christian region. Intelligence operations were conducted in association with the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, which had supporters in the Metn region. Another important base was the area of Maslakh and Karantina located at the northern entry of East Beirut and inhabited by Palestinians, Kurds, Syrians and Shia. Fateh and other Palestinian organisations had a strong presence in this area.

The Borj al-Barajneh camp, located in the southern suburb of Beirut, was the major military base in Beirut. As early as 1970, small munitions factories were established. The Borj al-Barajneh camp, by virtue of its strategic location, controlled access to the main road linking Beirut to the airport. So did the nearby camps of Sabra and Shatila, which later served as the Fateh headquarters in Beirut. By summer 1970 Fateh had a military personnel of several thousand and ten training bases: three in Tal-Za'tar, three in Borj al-Barajneh, two in Sabra and Shatila, and one in each of the camps at Jisr al-Basha, Dbayeh, Karantina and Mar Elias.²⁸

Frangiyeh's Election and Regional Respite On the domestic political scene, the summer of 1970 was a time of campaigning for the forthcoming presidential election. The opposition, led by Raymond Eddé, Camille Chamoun, Sa'eb Salam and Kamel al-Ass'ad was determined to end 'twelve years of Chehabist dominance'.²⁹ They succeeded in defeating the Chehabist candidate Elias Sarkis by one vote, and elected the candidate of a centrist coalition, Suleiman Frangiyeh. Chehab's refusal to run for the presidency

defeated the Chehabists. It was almost certain that had Chehab been the candidate facing Frangiyeh, he would have been elected. This is because deputies of the Kataeb Party as well as deputies of Kamal Jumblatt's parliamentary coalition would have supported Chehab, but not a candidate nominated by him.³⁰

Frangiyeh had been a member of parliament since 1960 and had already held a number of cabinet posts. His election was hailed by the opposition as a triumph for freedom and democracy.³¹ Sa'eb Salam, who assumed the premiership during the first three years of Frangiyeh's six-year term, dubbed Frangiyeh's election a 'white *coup d'état*'?³² Optimism was generated by expectations of sweeping change in government bureaucracy and in the Chehabist-controlled military establishment. With a new regime in place, the political process was activated.

The Frangiyeh regime took off with the formation of a new cabinet headed by Sa'eb Salam and composed of young successful professionals. Among the members of the 'youth cabinet', as it came to be known, were former deputy Ghassan Tuéni and editor of *al-Nahar*, Emile Bitar, a respected physician and a co-founder of the Democratic Party and economist Elias Saba. Members of the cabinet in varying degrees were, however, unable to implement their reformist policies: Tuéni in the Ministry of Education, Bitar in the Ministry of Health and Saba in the Ministry of Finance. Tuéni resigned after clashing with Frangiyeh and Salam over the introduction of new educational policies. Bitar also resigned after failing to end the monopoly of importers of pharmaceutical products. Saba, likewise, suffered a setback. His attempt to reform the tax system faced a strong opposition by business interests.³³

A few months after taking office, a large scale purge in the military took place. The target was the Chehabist military establishment, notably Deuxième Bureau officers. The most vocal critic of the Deuxième Bureau in 1970 was Prime Minister Salam who had accused Deuxième Bureau

commander Colonel Gaby Lahoud of tapping telephone lines.³⁴ Deuxième Bureau officers were arrested and tried on various charges, including the restriction of public freedom, violation of army regulations and squandering army funds. Most closely targeted were Lahoud and officers Sami al-Khatib, Sami al-Shaikha, Jean Nassif and Na'im Farah. Subsequently, Lahoud went to Spain, while other officers sought political refuge in Syria. Whether or not the purge was politically motivated, as it was widely believed, it had negative repercussions on the army morale and on the effectiveness of the army intelligence. These measures came at a critical time as PLO guerrillas entered Lebanon in large numbers after the Jordan war.

The first two years of the Frangiyeh regime were devoid of any crippling internal crisis associated with the PLO, partly because of the respite that Lebanon enjoyed from regional turmoil. This was due to three unexpected developments: Nasser's abrupt death in September 1970, Asad's take-over in Syria and the Jordan war in 1970–71.

Nasser's death in September 1970, only hours after he had helped negotiate an agreement between Arafat and King Hussein in Cairo, was an event that deeply affected the course of Arab politics in the 1970s. In the immediate aftermath of Nasser's death, inter-Arab relations underwent change. One casualty of Nasser's disappearance was the PLO in Jordan. Nasser's disappearance deprived the Palestinians of a badly-needed moderating influence in their conflict with the Hashemite monarch, since no Arab leader except Nasser was in a position to mediate a solution or to exert pressure on the two protagonists.³⁵

The other development affecting Lebanese politics in the early 1970s was Asad's accession to power in Syria. In November 1970, a few weeks after Lebanon's presidential elections, Asad was well on his way to completing his final crackdown on Ba'thist rivals. During the first two years in office, Asad was busy consolidating power in Syria. He was also building bridges with Arab regimes. This gave Lebanon breathing space, away from the habitual pattern of Syria's hegemonic policies towards Lebanon. Equally important was the cordial personal relationship between Asad and Frangiyeh, dating back to the late 1950s. It was to continue in a variety of ways during Frangiyeh's term and after the outbreak of war in 1975. One of the early indications of this new positive pattern in Syrian-Lebanese relations was the formation of a committee to discuss ways to improve economic relations

between the two countries. This was followed by the signing of a protocol in December 1970 dealing mostly with bilateral economic issues.³⁶

The war in Jordan also gave Lebanon a respite from regionally-generated turmoil in the early 1970s. The war provoked serious rifts within the guerrilla organisations. For this reason, the Palestinian leadership had to make a tactical retreat in Lebanon. The first such move was taken by the end of October 1970, when Arafat ordered the closure of Fedayin offices in several locations both inside and outside the camps.³⁷ This came following a lull in violence in Jordan, in the aftermath of the agreement reached in Cairo. Palestinian concern during this period centred on the consolidation of the guerrilla positions after they were dislodged from Amman.

To thwart attempts to instigate further dissension within Palestinian organisations, adjustment in Lebanon was needed. This meant consolidating unity within Palestinian ranks. Fateh maintained a low profile in Lebanon and Abu-Iyad called for the return of underground Fedayin operations.³⁸ As explained by Khalid alHassan, these moves were 'only a one-step retreat so that the movement could leap two steps forward.'³⁹

On 12 January 1971 clashes broke out between Fateh and other organisations, particularly Habash's PFLP.⁴⁰ A few days earlier, clashes were reported in Beirut between Fateh and 'Issam Sartawi's small organisation, the Action Organisation for the Liberation of Palestine. Sartawi, who then had ties with Cairo, was later detained by Fateh.⁴¹

But the more serious quarrel was between Fateh and the PFLP. In a public pronouncement made in Beirut, Fateh official Kamal 'Adwan accused the PFLP of complicity with the Jordanian regime. He presented a detailed account of the organisation's actions and gave a list of PFLP's misdeeds towards other organisations ever since attempts were made to unite the guerrilla groups in the fourth Palestinian National Council held in July 1968.⁴² He then went on to criticise the PFLP's refusal to abide by the agreement with the Jordanian authorities and stressed that the PFLP maintained only a small force in Jordan, and that Habash himself was under the protection of Fateh in Jarash (Jordan).⁴³ The following day the PFLP issued a moderate statement in which it emphasised that Palestinian arms would not be used against other Palestinians.⁴⁴

Fatehs accusations reflected differences within the PLO, which were already deeper than had been pronounced publicly. Two weeks later, Damascus announced its willingness to allow the PFLP to establish bases in Syria. Efforts to bring about unity within Palestinian ranks continued, and in July 1971 two small Palestinian organisations merged with Fateh.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, fighting in Jordan reached new heights. By the end of summer 1971, the Jordanian army succeeded in overrunning the remaining Palestinian strongholds. Ironically, the final military crackdown on PLO forces occurred as talks were underway to establish yet another union between three Arab states, now under the rule of three ambitious men who shared little in common except a momentary desire to unite: Sadat of Egypt, Asad of Syria and Qaddafi of Libya.

Inter-Palestinian and Palestinian-Israeli Confrontations in 1972

A first public attempt to steer the PLO back on the right track after the Jordan war was a gathering of forty Palestinian personalities at the Cairo residence of former PLO leader Ahmad al-Shuqairi.⁴⁶ They were pressed to devise contingency plans for the revolution's post-Jordan phase. Clearly, 1972 was a year of transition and healing for a badly-hit and divided PLO. It was also a year of partial retrenchment to help shield the internal Palestinian front. This defensive posture was reflected in Fatehs cautious approach in Lebanon. Fateh leaders were aware that an escalation of conflict in Lebanon would undermine the transition process from Jordan into Lebanon. Nonetheless, disturbances linked to particular Palestinian organisations continued. In January 1972, members of the Syrian-sponsored Sa'iqa attacked a Beirut office of Lebanese Internal Security forces.⁴⁷ This incident was promptly contained. Damascus denounced the attack and dispatched a Sa'iqa commander to Beirut to settle the problem with the Lebanese authorities.⁴⁸

While Syrian-Lebanese and Syrian-Palestinian relations were relatively smooth in 1972, Palestinian-Israeli warfare intensified. Throughout the year, Israel stepped up its military operations in Lebanon. Beginning in mid-January 1972, Israel carried out raids in the south and the Beqa in response to PLO commando operations against Israeli targets. Civilian targets were

hit, including houses, schools and other buildings, which Israel claimed were used by the guerrillas for military purposes.⁴⁹ Attacks were resumed in June and September 1972. In the process, the Lebanese army was engaged in heavy battles with the Israeli army for two consecutive days.

Once again, the question of PLO compliance with the Cairo Agreement surfaced on the political scene. PLO violations of the Cairo Agreement in 1971–72 continued, as shown in Table 14.1.

Table 14.1 Violations Committed by Palestinian Organisations, 1971–72

Type of Violation	1971	1972	Total
Rocket attacks on Israel from Lebanese Territory	30	34	54
Shooting and gunfire on different occasions	49	54	103
Public display of weapons	20	23	43
Infiltrations into restricted military areas	30	31	61
Arrests and kidnapping of civilians	17	33	49
Attacks at and threats to kill civilians	30	39	69
Occupation of houses by force	5	7	12
Training and arming of Lebanese citizens	28	23	51
Arrest of members of Palestinian groups for carrying unlicensed weapons and explosives	44	85	129
Bombing and use of explosive devices	–	3	3
Shooting at Lebanese military targets	8	18	26
Refusal to stop at army checkpoints	9	4	13
Attacks on army and internal security personnel	23	30	53
Premeditated killing of civilians and military	9	9	18
Establishing checkpoints and searching cars	3	16	19
Armed robberies	27	9	36
Attacks on Lebanese government authorities in public gatherings		8	8
Collecting contributions by force	7	2	9
Unlicensed buildings	6	4	10

Source: Lebanese Army Intelligence Report dated 3/7/1973.

This new wave of violence led to yet another round of Lebanese–Palestinian talks. A meeting was held at the presidential palace to discuss PLO artillery shelling of Israel from Lebanese territory and the location of guerrilla bases in the south. It was attended by the president, the prime minister, the army commander, and a Palestinian delegation headed by

Arafat. Proposals to revise some of the provisions of the Cairo Agreement were made.⁵⁰ Talks led to no concrete results. The Palestinian position was revealed in a statement made by a military commander in the south, in which he made it clear that PLO forces would not abandon the 'Arqub region where they had their 'last remaining military bases'.⁵¹ By the end of 1971, Palestinian forces stationed in south Lebanon numbered about 5,500, with Fateh having the largest number followed by Sa'iqa.⁵²

In an effort to defuse tension, Arafat initiated a public relations campaign, which included publicised visits and informal meetings with a number of Lebanese leaders, particularly with Maronite and Sunni politicians. Palestinian-Lebanese relations were strained following another indiscriminate Israeli raid on the Hasbaya region causing heavy casualties (48 dead, 75 injured) among the civilian population, the Lebanese army and the guerrillas.⁵³ In addition, Israel detained five Syrian army officers and one Lebanese army officer.⁵⁴ Apart from the controversy over the Cairo Agreement, this time the inhabitants of the Hasbaya region, among whom were many Druze, were vocal in their opposition to PLO military activities in their villages.⁵⁵ To contain Druze anger, Arafat included on his list of meetings and visits with Syrian officials a visit to Syrian Druze leader, Sultan Pasha al-Atrash.⁵⁶

The situation became more complicated than it had been a few months earlier. The latest flare-up unveiled the extent of internal Palestinian fragmentation and rivalries. The call for a 'freeze' (*tajmid*) of guerrilla operations in the south by some Palestinian organisations was the spark that ignited a dispute which involved the Sa'iqa and Ahmad Jibril's PFLP-General Command. Originally an officer in the Syrian army before the union period with Egypt in 1958, Jibril defected from the PFLP and formed his own organisation with Syrian backing.⁵⁷ Although the Jibril group was small, it was capable of mischief, and worked closely with Syrian intelligence and the Libyan regime.⁵⁸ Problems now were no longer confined to the erratic pattern of Palestinian-Lebanese politics. Rather, conflicts had to be settled between PLO factions themselves as well as between sponsoring Arab regimes before any serious agreement between Lebanon and the PLO could be reached. Differences within the PLO had

become too complex to be contained by informal gatherings and social events.

Arab mediation, notably that of the secretary-general of the Arab League, Mahmoud Riad, failed to bring about an agreement between the various Palestinian factions.⁵⁹ Arafat attempted mediation between PLO factions and Damascus.⁶⁰ After a few days of bargaining, an understanding was reached between the antagonistic guerrilla groups. This, in turn, facilitated an agreement between the Lebanese government and the Palestinian leadership.

Like its predecessors, this agreement was formulated in the vaguest possible terms. It did not negate the Cairo Agreement, but established new guidelines for guerrilla activities.⁶¹ In essence, this agreement, which also addressed differences between Syria and the PLO, was intended to maintain the status quo by 'freezing' military operations in the 'Arqub region. In this way, it could be viewed as an appendix to the Cairo Agreement.

No sooner had Palestinian organisations reached a *modus vivendi* than dissenters began to emerge. One of the early opponents to the notion of the 'freeze' was Nayif Hawatmeh, the leader of the DFLP. Fateh spokesman Kamal Nasser accused Hawatmeh of breaking the unity of the PLO. Increasing Palestinian confrontations were recorded in several camps in June 1972, at a time of increasing influx of Fateh fighters into Lebanon.⁶² Another split occurred within Fateh. In October 1972, Fateh was shaken by an internal rebellion provoked by disagreement within the leadership over the control of military bases in Lebanon and over a major reshuffling in senior guerrilla command posts.⁶³

Although these were the apparent motives for the dispute, the internal discord was much deeper. A local Fateh commander, Abu Yusif al-Kayid, staged a rebellion in a guerrilla base in the Beqa. It was put down by another Fateh commander Abu Musa, who later replaced 'Atallah 'Atallah (Abu al-Za'im) as Fateh general military commander in Lebanon.⁶⁴ The rebellion most probably inspired by Ahmad Jibril, who was on good terms with al-Kayid.⁶⁵ Jibril, who rejected all the agreements signed with the Lebanese government, had also occupied a base in the Sarafand region in the Beqa in violation of an earlier agreement made with the Lebanese army.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, the PLO and Israel were engaged in a spate of random violence. This involved a series of attacks and counter-attacks by both sides.

One bloody operation was the shooting of civilians at Tel-Aviv airport on 30 May by three members of the Japanese Red Army. Twenty-six people were killed and 80 injured. Another operation was the killing of nine Israeli athletes and a trainer during the Munich Olympic Games on 5 September 1972.⁶⁷ The Munich attack was claimed by Habash's PFLP. Israel placed responsibility for the Munich killings on Arab states who gave Palestinian organisations military, political and financial support. Palestinian leaders, particularly those whom Israel accused of being involved in the Munich killings and in hijacking operations, were also the target of attack. Among those killed by various sophisticated explosive techniques (e.g. letter bombs) in an interval of a few days, was PFLP leader Ghassan Kanafani. Palestinian officials Bassam Abu Sherif and Anis Sayigh, the director of the Palestine Research Centre and editor of an Arabic language Palestinian quarterly, were seriously injured.⁶⁸

Other bloody reprisals, the scene of which was Beirut, were attributed to Jordanian–Palestinian underground warfare. Explosives were planted at the offices of *al-Nahar* and at two Maronite churches. Lebanese authorities arrested a Jordanian diplomat who was suspected of being behind the explosions.⁶⁹ According to Palestinian sources, Fateh offices were also the target of similar attacks.⁷⁰ At about the same time, the Jordanian authorities uncovered a plot to overthrow King Hussein.⁷¹ A week later, Palestinian sources announced the discovery of a network of agents operating for the Jordanian regime within Fateh.⁷²

In September 1972, Lebanon paid a heavy price for PLO–Israeli violence. In direct retaliation for the Munich operation, Israel carried out the most intensive land and air raid in south Lebanon to date.⁷³ The operation went on for two days and resulted in a high casualty toll. It was the first large scale military confrontation with the Lebanese army. The Lebanese government earned words of praise for standing up to Israeli aggression from Lebanese politicians as well as from Arab leaders.⁷⁴

Following these raids, meetings were held between Lebanese and Palestinian leaders. Once again the Palestinian leadership reiterated its willingness to abide by the agreements signed with the Lebanese government. These promises were no more than clichés uttered in times of

crisis. Indeed, a few weeks later clashes erupted between Lebanese Army troops and the guerrillas in the south.⁷⁵

The 1972 Parliamentary Elections Lebanon's political process was not hampered by the turmoil. The important political event in 1972 was the election of a new parliament. These legislative elections were the most orderly and freest since independence. The election resulted in the highest turnover rate to date and parliament had the largest number of newcomers (39 deputies out of a total of 99) since 1943, drawn from all sectarian groups and political forces.⁷⁶

The most notable 'outcasts' in the 1972 Chamber were three deputies advocating an unusual political platform: 'Abdul-Majid al-Rafi'i from Tripoli (a leading member of the Lebanon branch of the pro-Iraqi Ba'th Party), Najah Wakim from Beirut's third district (a member of a local Nasserite group) and 'Ali al-Khalil from the Tyre district in the south (a former member of the Ba'th Party). Equally interesting about these deputies was not only their electoral victory but also the way in which it was achieved. All three ran on an independent ticket, that is, not on an electoral list, usually headed by one of the strongest candidates in the district. Most telling was Wakim's victory against veteran Greek Orthodox politician Nassim Majdalani. The latter was the running mate of Premier Sa'eb Salam. Wakim's election did not go unnoticed by the leaders of the Greek Orthodox community who held a demonstration to protest Wakim's election. They also called for Wakim's boycott on the grounds that his election by a majority of Sunni votes did not reflect the will of the community.⁷⁷

Another development helped to improve the image of the government: the investigation of a scandalous affair of army purchases of French-made anti-aircraft missiles (Crotale).⁷⁸ The deal did not materialise. Towards the end of 1972 the country began to face socio-economic problems, involving factory workers, tobacco growers and school teachers. Disturbances took place in

November 1972, when internal security forces clashed with striking workers at the Ghandour confection factories. Two workers were killed and 19 injured, including 13 policemen.⁷⁹ Leftist parties held demonstrations in opposition of the government's brutal handling of the strike. An agreement was reached between the workers and their employer through the mediation of the General Labour Union and the Ministry of Labour. The strike was called off in early December.

Moreover, in October and November 1972, a series of PLO-provoked clashes took place with the Lebanese Army and Internal Security forces in various locations in the south.⁸⁰ The clashes were confined to the south and had no broader political implications.

Once secure in Lebanon, the power struggle both within and between PLO organisations became more manifest. Ararat's leadership and policy objectives were disputed by Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad), Abu Yusif al-Najjar, Kamal 'Adwan and Abu Iyad. Differences hinged on Fateh's policy of rapprochement with Jordan and on the armed struggle in the occupied territories.⁸¹

By the end of 1972, PLO rank and file had recovered from the Jordan war. The six major Palestinian organisations were able to rebuild their military and political infrastructure in Lebanon both inside and outside the camps. They also established a strong command structure with extensive links with several Arab regimes as well as with the two communist powers, China and the Soviet Union and their client states.⁸²

Notes

- 1 On the war in Jordan, see Quandt, *Decade of Decisions...*, pp. 105–27; Quandt, *The Politics...*, pp. 124–45 and Jabber, in Quandt, et al., *Ibid.*, pp. 199–216.
- 2 See, for example, Hisham Sharabi, 'Palestine Resistance: Crisis and Reassessment', *Middle East Newsletter* (January 1971).
- 3 Abu Iyad, *My Home...*, pp. 97–120.
- 4 Two other unsuccessful assassination attempts targeted then Jordanian ambassador to Britain Zeid al-Rifa'i and the Jordanian ambassador to Switzerland. The creation of Black September was linked to disputes within Fateh during the war in Jordan. Arafat was accused of being behind the killing of a Fateh leader Abu 'Ali Iyad in Jordan who represented the radical wing within Fateh. The Fateh commander in Lebanon in 1970–71 Yahya 'Ashur Hamdan Abdul-Qader was close to Abu 'Ali Iyad. Black September's main figures were Abu Yusif al-Najjar, Yahya 'Ashur, Hassan Salameh, Abu 'Ammar Sa'd. Lebanese Army Report dated 17/1/1972. On the origins of Black September, see *Black September*, (Beirut: Palestine Research Centre, 1971). On Fateh's involvement in Black September, see *al-Nahar*, 12 October 1972. See also Christopher Dobson, *Black September: Its Short, Violent History* (New York: Macmillan, 1973).
- 5 The four elements involved in the assassination were: Ziyad Muhammad al-Helou, Jawad Ahmad Abu 'Aziza, Munzer Suleiman Khashan, Nabil Hussein Salameh. They are all Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon. Lebanese Army Security Report dated 17/1/1972.
- 6 *Al-Nahar*, 19 March 1970. Also in March disturbances took place in the Nahr alBarid camp near Tripoli. *Al-Nahar*, 25 March 1970. Earlier in January, Palestinian guerrillas hijacked an American airplane to Beirut airport.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 22 March 1970 ('Ya 'Uruba Thuri Thuri, Khalli Helou Yilhaq Nurl').
- 8 *Ibid.*, 26 March 1970. See also Jalloul, *Naqd al-Silah...*, pp. 60–2. The Palestinian commando's name is Sa'id al-Ghawash.
- 9 *Al-Nahar*, 26 March 1970.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 Jalloul, *Naqd al-Silah...*, p. 61.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 62.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Al-Nahar*, 27 and 28 March 1970.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 31 March 1970.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 7 May 1969. One slogan read: 'The Fedayin should kill the Zionists and not our children'.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 14 May 1970.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 13 May 1970. On May 19 and 20, *al-Nahar* printed two front-page pictures showing the Palestinian flag placed next to the Lebanese flag on a building of Lebanese internal security forces near the Syrian border.
- 20 Lebanese army casualties: 6 killed, 15 injured and 6 tanks destroyed; Palestinian casualties: 30 killed and many others injured. In addition, there was property damage in 16 villages, *al-Nahar*, 13 and 22 May 1970.
- 21 *Al-Nahar*, 25 May 1970.

- 22 Ibid., 27 May 1970.
- 23 Ibid., 15 June 1970.
- 24 Ibid., 28 May 1970.
- 25 Ibid., 29 June 1970.
- 26 *Al-'Amal*, 27 August 1970.
- 27 Interview with a former Lebanese member of Fateh who did not want to be identified.
- 28 *Al-'Amal*, 27 August 1970.
- 29 Raymond Eddé was the most vocal opponent to Chehab. In a famous declaration, he stated that three dangers threatened Lebanon: Israel, communism and Chehabism. See *al-Nahar*, 27 January 1969.
- 30 Gemayel declared he would support Chehab's candidacy and so did Jumblatt. But neither one was committed to any candidate chosen by Chehab. See interview with Sami al-Khatib, *al-Wasat*, 26 January 1994, pp. 23–4.
- 31 For a political portrait of Frangiyeh, see *al-Dayri, Mann Yassna'*, pp. 125–57.
- 32 *Al-Nahar*, 19 August 1970.
- 33 Wade R. Gorla, *Sovereignty and Leadership in Lebanon, 1943–1976* (London: Ithaca Press, 1985): 150 (fn. 71).
- 34 *Al-Nahar*, 11 December 1970.
- 35 According to Abu Iyad, 'Hussein would never have dared carry out his plan to eliminate the Fedayin from Jordan if Nasser had still been alive'. *My Home...*, p. 91.
- 36 *Al-Nahar*, 18 and 23 December 1970.
- 37 Ibid., 31 October 1970.
- 38 Ibid., 4 January 1971.
- 39 Ibid., 5 January 1971.
- 40 Ibid., 13 and 17 January 1971.
- 41 Ibid., 1 January 1971.
- 42 Ibid., 17 January 1971.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Ibid., 18 January 1971.
- 45 'Issam Sartawi's Action Organization for the Liberation of Palestine and the Organisation of Arab Palestine led by Ahmad Za'rur. See *al-Nahar*, 9 July 1971.
- 46 Ibid., 12 December 1971.
- 47 Ibid., 2 January 1972.
- 48 Ibid., 4 January 1972.
- 49 Ibid., 14 January 1972.
- 50 Ibid., 28 February 1972.
- 51 Ibid., 1 March 1972.
- 52 Lebanese Army Report, 'Tatawur 'Adid al-Munazamat al-Fida'iyya fi al-Qita'at al' Askar iyya', 1971.
- 53 *Al-Nahar*, 22 June 1972.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Ibid., 23 June 1972.

- 56 Ibid., 27 June 1972.
- 57 Quandt, *The Politics...*, pp. 62–3; Chamussy, *Chronique...*, pp. 227–8.
- 58 *Al-Nahar*, 29 June 1972.
- 59 Ibid., 27 June 1972.
- 60 Ibid., 28 June 1972.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Ibid., 10 and 12 June 1972.
- 63 Ibid., 6 October 1972.
- 64 Ibid., 15, 16, 19 October 1972.
- 65 Ibid., 15 October 1972. Before joining Fateh, al-Kayid was a member of Sartawi's Action Organisation for the Liberation of Palestine.
- 66 Ibid., 15 October 1972.
- 67 The Japanese Red Army operated closely with the PFLP. According to a member of the group interviewed in Lebanon, PFLP leader Wadih Haddad masterminded the airport raid. See *al-Mustaqbal*, 22 June 1985, pp. 18–24.
- 68 *Al-Nahar*, 8, 19, 25 June 1972.
- 69 Ibid., 21 November 1972.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Ibid., 26 November 1972.
- 72 Ibid., 3 December 1972.
- 73 Ibid., 17 and 18 September 1972.
- 74 Ibid., 27 and 29 September 1972.
- 75 Ibid., 9 December 1972.
- 76 See Harik, *Mann Yahkum...*
- 77 *Al-Nahar*, 19 April 1972.
- 78 Ibid., 17 and 18 July 1972.
- 79 For details on disturbances related to socio-economic issues, see Chamussy, 'Une Difficile...', pp. 53–77. On student-related disputes, John Donohue, 'Ghassan Tuéni et les Etudiants des Ecoles Secondaires' *Travaux et Jours*, 38 (January–March 1971): 65–80; John Donohue, 'Conflit...', pp. 101–13. For an account of political currents as reflected in various ideological orientations at the American University of Beirut, Gordon, *Lebanon...*, pp. 175–233.
- 80 These clashes took place on 21/10/1972, 21/11/1972 and 16/12/1972. Lebanese Army Report entitled 'Taqqim al-Wad' al-Fida'i Ba'da Ayyar 1973', p. 9
- 81 Ibid., pp. 6–9.
- 82 See Galia Golan, *The Soviet Union and the Palestine Liberation Organization: An Uneasy Alliance* (New York: Praeger, 1980).

The Year of Living Dangerously, 1973

If 1972 was a year of confusion and uncertainty for the PLO, 1973 was a year of serious disturbances not only for the PLO but also for Lebanon. The 'honeymoon' in regional politics that the Frangiyeh regime enjoyed during its first two years in office was over. On the domestic front, problems of socio-economic nature began to preoccupy the government. In addition, a new controversial issue entered the political discourse: that of power-sharing (*al-musharaka*).

The government sought to address socio-economic problems by launching a six-year developmental plan in 1972. Attempts were also made in October 1972 to reform the administration (the Ba'bda Conclave for Administrative Reform). These efforts, however, produced no concrete results and were overshadowed by more pressing political problems.

Following the 1972 parliamentary elections a new 16-member cabinet, headed by Sa'eb Salam, was formed on 27 May 1972. Unlike the previous 'youth cabinet', the new one was made up of established politicians and reflected the parliamentary majority. Excluded was Kamal Jumblatt whose relations with Salam were strained prior to and after the formation of the cabinet. The cabinet lasted for nearly a year until the resignation of Salam following the Israeli raid in Beirut in April 1973.

The Israeli Raid in Beirut and its 'Domino Effect'

The stunning development in 1973 was the Israeli commando operation in the heart of Beirut on 10 April which claimed the lives of two influential Fateh officials, Muhammad Yusif al-Najjar (Abu Yusif) and Kamal 'Adwan

and PLO spokesman Kamal Nasser. Al-Najjar had links with Black September and was head of the Higher Political Committee for the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon and 'Adwan was in charge of Fateh operations in the occupied territories. The raid, which went on for about 40 minutes,¹ was one of the most sophisticated and well-planned commando operations that Israel had ever conducted outside its territory.

There are different accounts of the Israeli operation. While both concur that a seaborne Israeli commando unit landed on the Beirut coastline and that the commandos left from the Uza'i beach area in Ramlet al-Bayda, they diverge on the landing location. One account claims that the commandos' arrival and departure was from the same location in Ramlet al-Bayda.² The other claims that the commandos landed in the Dawra area north of Beirut and left from Ramlet al-Bayda south of the city.³ In fact, in Dawra, targets were attacked, including an ammunition factory owned by an Armenian who worked with Fateh.⁴ At the same time Israeli units bombarded coastal areas near the city of Sidon to divert attention from the raid in Beirut.⁵

The commando unit that landed in Beirut was met by four foreign operators who had come to Beirut one week earlier to plan for the operation and who had stayed in different hotels in the city.⁶ Their travel documents showed that they were European nationals (British, Swiss and Belgian).⁷ One of them went to Rome two or three days prior to the raid and returned to Beirut the next day.⁸ The mission of the operators was to prepare the 'groundwork' for the raid and to drive the Israeli commandos to their targets.⁹ The operators used four cars rented a few days earlier from two different car rental agencies in Beirut. They drove the commandos to two different locations, in Verdun and Sabra, where they carried out their attacks.¹⁰ Then they drove them back to Ramlet al-Bayda and left with the commandos leaving their cars on the beach.

The three Palestinian leaders were brutally murdered inside their respective apartments. Al-Najjar's wife was also killed. Two resided in the same building and the third in a nearby building on Verdun street. Three Palestinian guards were also killed. Another target was a Fateh building in Sabra used frequently by Arafat.¹¹ Whether or not Arafat was targeted could not be established.¹²

When Lebanese military authorities were informed that clashes were taking place in the Verdun area, they first assumed that they involved PLO factions. Indeed, three days earlier, clashes erupted in the Dbayeh camp between Sa'iqa and Fateh supporters leading to the killing of one Fateh guerrilla.¹³ Internal security forces (Brigade 16) were dispatched to the Verdun area. Upon arrival, they clashed with Palestinian gunmen who were on the scene. One Lebanese policeman was killed and six were injured, including one officer.

Three days later, the funeral procession of the three Palestinian leaders drew thousands of people: it turned into a massive show of support for the PLO. The funeral was attended by Lebanon's major Muslim and Christian leaders, including Pierre Gemayel and Raymond Eddé.

Not surprisingly, many unanswered questions surrounded the entire episode. In the first place, why were these three men targeted? Why not other senior Palestinian leaders who were more visible politically and equally implicated in attacks against Israel? Were they targeted because they were relatively more accessible? Why would Israel undertake such an operation in the heart of Beirut and in such a defiant way rather than elsewhere, for PLO leaders were within Israeli reach outside Lebanon as well? Who would benefit most from this assault, and can the timing of this well-planned operation be explained? While answers to these questions cannot be given with certainty, one can analyse the repercussions of this operation on Lebanese internal politics and on Lebanese-Palestinian relations.

To the extent that Israel had intended to destabilise Lebanon, instigate conflict between the Lebanese authorities and the PLO and provoke divisions within the PLO, the raid was a success. For the Lebanese government, the raid on the country's capital was, to say the least, extremely embarrassing. By the time Lebanese security authorities knew that it was an Israeli raid – as opposed to clashes between PLO gunmen or between the latter and Lebanese Army and/or security forces, as was usually the case – the Israeli commandos were gone. The efficacy and speed of the operation (20 to 40 minutes) left little time for a successful counter-attack,¹⁴ let alone for attempts to save the lives of the three Palestinian

leaders living in nearby buildings especially since no special security measures were taken prior to the raid.¹⁵

Unlike the 1968 Israeli raid on Beirut airport which targeted Lebanese interests, the 1973 raid targeted the PLO. Although the PLO was deeply shaken by the raid, it was after all Lebanon that bore the brunt of Israeli assaults. The target this time was not the civilian population caught in the crossfire in a village along Lebanon's southern border but the capital city.

One immediate outcome of the raid was the breakdown in relations between Frangiyeh and Salam. For Salam, someone should have taken responsibility for the raid, that is, for the lack of proper security measures. Salam quickly called for the immediate dismissal of Lebanese Army Commander General Iskandar Ghanem. Frangiyeh refused to dismiss Ghanem prior to any proper investigation to determine responsibilities, all the more so because the raid was not a standard military confrontation but a highly sophisticated operation carried out in a few minutes. For Frangiyeh, looking for scapegoats was counterproductive. For Salam, Ghanem's resignation was needed. Their conflicting positions, which were reported in the press, added to their already strained relationship prior to the raid,¹⁶ led to political divorce between the two men. Salam registered his objection by submitting his resignation. A few days later, Frangiyeh called on deputy Amin al-Hafiz to form a new cabinet.

An outsider to the 'club of prime ministers', Hafiz faced opposition from the Sunni political establishment in the nine weeks during which he assumed the premiership. Hafiz had ties with Fateh leaders¹⁷ and was backed by Jumblatt. He formed a cabinet and sought to improve relations with the Palestinian leadership, but failed to secure Sunni support. Most opposed to Hafiz was former Premier Rashid Karame, on whose electoral list Hafiz ran in parliamentary elections in Tripoli. Faced by a strong boycott by the Sunni establishment, Hafiz, who was not an established *za'im* and lacked a power base of his own, had to resign.

The 1973 crisis, like that of 1969, had its 'domino effect' on Lebanese politics. It opened the country to various destabilising developments. The raid was an occasion for all internal and external parties to capitalise on the event. Apart from the customary pattern of Lebanese-Palestinian politics, two novel dimensions emerged in 1973: inter-Palestinian rivalries opposing

Fateh to radical guerrilla groups and Syrian overt military and political intervention in Lebanese politics.

Before the Israeli raid, PLO confrontations with the Lebanese army intensified, particularly after October 1972. Tension receded in early 1973, only to mount again following an attack by the guerrillas on 31 March on a Lebanese army post in the south, killing two soldiers and injuring a third.¹⁸ On 14 April, one day after the funeral of the three Palestinian leaders, elements of the PFLP bombed the oil tanks at the Medreco refinery in Zahrani near Sidon.¹⁹ A few days later, on 27 April, three Fateh guerrillas carrying explosives were detained at Beirut airport.²⁰ The next day a bomb was thrown at the residence of the Jordanian ambassador causing material damage.²¹ On 29 April, security forces discovered a bomb at the airport after they received a call from an unknown source. The caller demanded the release of the guerrillas that were detained two days earlier.²² Moreover, on 30 April four elements of Jibril's PFLP-GC, carrying explosive devices, were arrested near the building of the American embassy.²³ On the same day, two armed elements belonging to Hawatmeh's DFLP were arrested carrying explosives in the Mazra'a area in Beirut.²⁴

The incident that added fuel to the fire was the kidnapping on 1 and 2 May of three army soldiers.²⁵ This meant a qualitative escalation of the crisis. The kidnapping was carried out by the DFLP.²⁶ It was the kind of provocation that the army could not tolerate. Army units took positions around major Palestinian camps in Beirut's suburbs and detained several Palestinian elements belonging mostly to the Hawatmeh, Habash and Jibril groups. As negotiations got underway to secure the release of the three soldiers, elements of the DFLP fired rockets at army units stationed in various parts of the city, including the airport. It was not until the fourth day after the kidnapping of the soldiers that the army took action.²⁷

Large scale fighting erupted between the army and PLO forces. A state of war prevailed in the country. Confrontations, in which heavy weapons were used, went on for several days and spread to various parts of Beirut and its suburbs. These were the most serious military confrontations between the two sides since the clashes of 1969. The climax in these confrontations was the use of the air force against military targets in the Sabra and Shatila camps near Beirut.²⁸ But air raids were quickly brought to a halt following

pressure exercised on President Frangiyeh by Syria²⁹ and by other Arab regimes. Despite Frangiyeh's forceful action and his categorical refusal to allow an army of occupation in Lebanon,³⁰ he had to call off military operations. In two days of fighting the casualty toll was high on both sides: 12 Lebanese soldiers killed and 40 injured, including three officers and 19 Palestinian guerrillas killed and 98 injured.³¹

Efforts to reach a cease-fire failed. In the process, Palestinian mediator Nada Khalid al-Yashruti, the widow of a Palestinian leader, was shot dead by unknown gunmen as she walked into the entrance of her building after participating in a meeting to deal with the crisis at the presidential palace. The assassination of a key Palestinian mediator known to have had good ties with Lebanese leaders, particularly the Christian, had grave implications. Clearly, there were 'third parties', probably within the ranks of radical Palestinian groups, who sought to aggravate the crisis.³²

Frangiyeh's stand was unequivocal: Lebanon was willing to deal with the guerrillas the same way that other Arab governments were dealing with them. This meant that Lebanon would not tolerate PLO excesses at a time when most Arab regimes denied them the right to organise not only militarily but also politically. Gemayel and Chamoun supported Frangiyeh's position.³³ Palestinian leaders, for their part, denounced the Lebanese authorities and accused Frangiyeh of being an 'agent of American imperialism' and of seeking to 'liquidate the revolution'.³⁴

The Lebanese army went on the offensive, and had military superiority over the PLO. But it could not complete its task. Although from a military standpoint the army was in a position to enter the Sabra and Shatila camps,³⁵ entering camps was one thing, imposing order and controlling the guerrillas throughout the country was another. In the absence of unequivocal political support from the Muslim leadership, and specifically from the prime minister, no forceful action by the army was possible. Without such backing Frangiyeh was powerless and so was the army.

Indeed, on the whole, the Sunni political establishment supported the guerrillas. Leading Muslim figures, particularly Sunni leaders, condemned the Lebanese government and accused the army of aggression against the Palestinians.³⁶ Sunni Mufti Khalid, whose mediation was sought by Frangiyeh through Takiyeddin alSolh to help release the three kidnapped

Lebanese army soldiers, declared that the Palestinian Resistance was the army of the Muslims.³⁷ As for the Jumblatt-led Left, support for the PLO was unconditional. Three cars belonging to three deputies of Jumblatt's parliamentary coalition, Zahir al-Khatib, Farid Jubran and Fouad Tehini, used to smuggle weapons to the guerrillas and their Lebanese allies, were detained.³⁸ Al-Khatib was in his car at the time of the detention and was accompanied by the head of the pro-Syrian Ba'th Party branch in al-Khatib's home district, the Shouf.³⁹

Arab regimes, for their part, were unanimous in their condemnation of the Lebanese government. Most threatening for Lebanon was Syria's reaction to the events. On 8 May Damascus closed its borders with Lebanon.⁴⁰ By so doing, it closed Lebanon's land access to Arab countries and paralysed its transit trade. Damascus also allowed the entry of several hundred fighters belonging to the Yarmouk Brigade into southern Lebanon.⁴¹ Some of these troops were stationed in Palestinian camps and placed under the command of Fateh leader Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad).⁴² Soon afterwards, Syrian officials Abdul-Halim Khaddam and Muhammad al-Kholi arrived in Beirut on a mediating mission. A few days later, several hundred Palestinian troops were sent into the Beqa where fighting spread around Lebanon's Air force base in Rayaq.⁴³

The Melkart Agreement As fighting escalated, Mahmoud Riad, the secretary-general of the Arab League arrived in Beirut to mediate between the protagonists. While he sought to moderate the Syrian position, other Arab countries such as Iraq and Libya seized the opportunity to capitalise on the crisis. Libyan President Mu'ammar Qaddafi did not hesitate to call on PLO forces to occupy Beirut's international airport.⁴⁴

Mahmoud Riad's mission in 1973 was of particular significance, for it was Riad himself who, in his capacity then as Egypt's foreign minister, took part in the talks that led to the signing of the 1969 Cairo Agreement. On 30 May 1973 Riad met with three Palestinian leaders Toufic al-Safadi, Salah Salah and Yasir 'Abd Rabbu and two Lebanese army officers Ahmad al-Hajj and Deeb Kamal at the Egyptian embassy in Beirut.⁴⁵ Riad opened the meeting by presenting a general overview of the deteriorating Arab position vis-à-vis Israel since 1948. He then explained that 'if the Arabs had failed all along to stop Israeli occupation of Arab land, we should not give Israel the excuse to capture more land and resources, such as Lebanon's water resources and Jordan's East Bank'. What we need now, Riad continued, 'is to mobilise our resources and unite our ranks to face the enemy'. He then said that the 'Palestinian problem cannot be solved in Beirut. Any solution will require years of adequate work. Therefore, inter-Arab conflicts ... will ruin our forces and will give Israel the evidence of our inability to coexist with the Jews.'

Riad's remarks were intended as an introductory statement to his reading of the Cairo Agreement in 1969 to the present. Addressing himself to the Palestinian delegation, Riad explained that: ... in 1969, Arab fronts were opened to confrontations with Israel. At that time, it was decided that the Palestinian Resistance should take part in the war effort from all the countries adjacent to Israel, including Lebanon. The objective of the Cairo Agreement was to organise the Feda'i activities in Lebanon in ways that would not give the enemy the pretext to occupy parts of its land. For this reason we indicated the need to have Feda'i bases in Syria and to create bases in Lebanon to provide first-aid support and food, etc ... and we specified the areas of passage through Lebanon into the occupied territories. Today, however, Riad stresses that: ... the Arab situation differs from that of 1969. All Arab fronts are quiet and an agreement was reached to freeze all military operations from Lebanon so that Israel would not be given any pretext to occupy any part of Lebanese territory. We should not make Lebanon alone bear the burden of our fight with Israel. And since the Cairo Agreement was made to organise Feda'i operations into Israel, and since these operations are currently frozen, then I can tell you that the Cairo Agreement is equally frozen now.

As for the 'other provisions of the agreement', Riad explained that 'they are restrictions on the movement of the Palestinian Resistance in return for the facilities it received [in Lebanon] to enter into the occupied territories. For this reason, words like 'sovereignty' and 'security' of Lebanon appear in the text to reassure the Lebanese, particularly those who then opposed and continue to oppose the agreement'. Riad then concluded by saying that 'at the time of the signing of the agreement', he had given 'a written interpretation of the meaning of each word that appeared in it.'

In his expose, Riad put the blame on the Palestinians for seeking to aggravate problems in Lebanon, for violating the Cairo Agreement and for not abiding by the Arab decision to freeze military operations. He also presented an updated interpretation of the Cairo Agreement. According to Riad, the PLO would join the fight against Israel alongside other Arab countries only when war efforts were underway, as was the case in the late 1960s. And since no confrontations were taking place in 1973, restraint on all parties should be exercised. He also indicated that the PLO was given facilities in Lebanon in 1969 to carry out military operations against Israel, and not in Lebanon whose sovereignty and security was to be respected.

This revealing account by the secretary-general of the Arab League reflected the Egyptian position towards the events in Lebanon. Cairo called for moderation and pragmatism. This was a time when Sadat was preparing for the 1973 war, which erupted four months later. For Cairo, unity of ranks came first and not irresponsible maximalism. All that Egypt could do under the prevailing circumstances in 1973, Riad noted, was to remain steadfast (*al-sumud*).⁴⁶

Riad's stand, and his interpretations of developments since 1969, helped moderate the Palestinian position. PLO leaders hoped to receive the same kind of Egyptian support as in the late 1960s, but that was not forthcoming. As fighting subsided, a military committee was formed to help impose a cease-fire. A series of meetings were held on 15, 16 and 17 May between a Palestinian delegation and representatives of the Lebanese army in Melkart Hotel in Beirut. The Palestinian delegation included representatives of three organisations: Abu al-Za'im representing Fateh, Abu 'Adnan representing the DFLP and Salah Salah representing the PFLP. The Lebanese delegation

included Colonel Ahmad al-Hajj, Lieutenant Colonel Nazih Rashed and Major Deeb Kamal (Lt-Colonel Salim Mughabghab replaced Rashed in the first meeting). The Melkart Agreement of 17 May 1973 reaffirmed the Cairo Agreement and added a number of military provisions to it. A Higher Co-ordination Committee, made up of representatives of the Lebanese army and the Palestinian organisations, was formed and was charged to supervise the implementation of the new agreement.⁴⁷

Unlike the Cairo Agreement, which included broad provisions dealing with Palestinian military and civilian presence in Lebanon, the Melkart Agreement was comprehensive and detailed.⁴⁸ It dealt with specific provisions covering various aspects of Palestinian armed presence in and outside the camps. The agreement's ten headings reflected its content: 1) Military presence in the camps and in border regions; 2) Movement of civilian and military leadership throughout the country; 3) Military training; 4) Military operations; 5) Command bases; 6) Information; 7) Controlling contraventions and offences; 8) Foreigners; 9) Co-ordination; 10) Wishes of the Palestinian side.

The main provisions of the Melkart Agreement were as follows. First, no commando presence would be allowed in the camps. Security in the camps would be insured by militia elements who reside in the camp and who are not members of the resistance forces. In addition, a Lebanese internal security post would be located near each camp and only light weapons are allowed in the camps. Second, in the southern border regions no military presence would be allowed outside the camps. Military posts could be established only in specified areas. All other posts would have to be dismantled. Also, the number of military personnel in each post was specified and no military presence was to be allowed inside the villages.

Third, the movement of military personnel would be co-ordinated with Lebanese military authorities. Movement would be allowed without carrying weapons and only in civilian dress. Military commanders of the rank of lieutenant and above could carry individual weapons. Fourth, no military training would be allowed in the camps. Training could take place in one location only, near Ba'albak in the Beqa. Fifth, all military operations from Lebanese territories would be suspended according to the decisions of the Joint Arab Defence Council. Therefore, commando operations from

Lebanon were forbidden. Sixth, other provisions dealing with non-military issues such as information, the command structure, offences and co-ordination emphasised the supremacy of Lebanese law and the respect of Lebanon's sovereignty and security.

These detailed provisions were in response to the long list of Palestinian violations of the Cairo Agreement. The Melkart Agreement, however, included a new provision that went beyond its predecessor. This was the suspension of guerrilla operations from Lebanon against Israel. Equally important were the restrictions imposed on the movement of the guerrillas and the detailed regulatory measures that the Melkart Agreement included in comparison with the Cairo Agreement. In theory, these measures should have helped establish a basis for orderly relations between the Lebanese authorities and the PLO.

From the standpoint of Lebanese national interests, the Melkart Agreement was more favourable than the Cairo Agreement. PLO organisations were under stricter control and their activities were more restrained. The agreement gave the Lebanese government more legal power to impose order. But this was not enough so long as political power was lacking. The Lebanese government 'controlled' the law and its interpretation, while the Palestinians controlled the land. In 1973, the PLO could afford to show flexibility and to make concessions, knowing full well that these concessions were only on paper. By contrast to 1969, the PLO in 1973 had strong political support and a solid presence on the ground. It was in a position to absorb a tactical retreat on paper. In 1969, any agreement on paper with the Lebanese government was a major breakthrough.

Not surprisingly, the Melkart Agreement fared no better than its predecessors. If earlier agreements were violated by a relatively weaker and more vulnerable PLO, the Melkart Agreement had little chance of being honoured by a heavily armed, well-connected and deeply entrenched PLO. The Palestinian reading of the agreement was unveiled when it was put to the test. In the three months following the signing of the agreement, 418 Palestinian violations were recorded.⁴⁹ These violations consisted of the kidnapping of military personnel and civilians, shooting of military targets, carrying weapons and explosives, establishing checkpoints and various forms of defiance of the Lebanese authorities.

A detailed assessment of the implementation of the Melkart Agreement produced by the Lebanese army three months after its signing revealed that little had changed whether in the camps or in the border region.⁵⁰ Only one military post in the south was removed (in Marj al-Zuhur). Initially, military officials, particularly Fateh, were inclined to co-operate with the Lebanese authorities, but the civilian leadership acted as if no agreement had been signed. Military operations against Israel were temporarily frozen. They were resumed on a large scale in early 1974 in the aftermath of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war.

In the end, the Melkart Agreement had little impact on Lebanese-Palestinian relations. At best, it was a short-lived cease-fire. At worst, it was a temporary settlement that was completely ignored. Like the Cairo Agreement, the mechanism of enforcement was lacking. Similarly, no third party was available on a 24-hour basis to negotiate yet another agreement in the event of a breakdown. The good offices of Mahmoud Riad could not keep up with the frequency of violations. Nor could high level mediations be repeated on a weekly or monthly basis. By the very pan-Arab nature of the Palestinian cause, Beirut's politics were 'Arabised' not only politically but also militarily.⁵¹

Asad's Political Debut in Lebanon: Stick and Carrot
As in the 1969 crisis, Syria was the most active Arab country in the 1973 crisis. Three years after taking office, President Asad was in firm control. Secure internally and accepted regionally, the Syrian regime was now ready to resume its usual hegemonic practices in Lebanon. In the 1970s, it was not only Lebanese domestic politics that attracted Syrian attention, but also the PLO. PLO politics had a dual significance for the Asad regime: pan-Arab political and ideological rivalry, notably with the rival Ba'thist

Iraqi regime, and the politics of the Arab–Israeli conflict.

For Lebanon, the shifting sands of PLO politics resulted in a number of unpleasant surprises. What began as an Israeli raid on Palestinian targets turned into confrontations between the Lebanese army and PLO guerrillas and provided the pretext for direct Syrian military and political intervention both in Lebanese and Palestinian affairs. Syria's dual role in escalating the crisis, and subsequently in containing it, marked a new pattern of Syrian interventionist strategy in Lebanon.

Following the resignation of the cabinet of Amin al-Hafiz, which lasted no longer than two months, the formation of a new cabinet became the central political concern. But there was another obstacle that had to be removed to bring the situation back to normal. This was the normalisation of Lebanese-Syrian relations which meant the opening of borders between the two countries, closed by Damascus a few weeks earlier. Not only did Damascus refuse to open its borders, it imposed an additional punitive measure by closing off Syrian air space to Lebanese aircraft.⁵²

The message that Damascus sought to convey did come across, but only after more than three months of political tension. The timing of the Syrian decision to end its punitive measures was meant to coincide with the third anniversary of Frangiyeh's election to the presidency. This was a calculated gesture. Despite talks between Lebanese and Syrian officials, only one move had a magical impact on breaking the deadlock: the visit of the president's son, deputy Tony Frangiyeh, to Damascus. Five days after the trip to Damascus, relations were normalised and a long list of Syrian demands from the Lebanese government was dropped.

Syria's action was intended as a strong reminder to Frangiyeh that the Asad regime had become a major power broker in Lebanon and that smooth relations between the two men would set the stage for harmonious relations between the two countries. It was believed that one reason behind Syria's hard-line position was a comment made by Frangiyeh in which he accused Syria of complicity in the May events and boasted that Lebanon was able to withstand such threats.⁵³ Asad is skilful at using coded messages in his

dealings with Arab and non-Arab leaders, and the message was not lost on Frangiyeh.

In reality, however, the Syrian position was much more than an episode of arm-twisting between Frangiyeh and Asad. Damascus presented a list of demands as a condition to normalise relations between the two countries. These demands reflected the broad lines of Syrian interests in Lebanon.⁵⁴ It was not until two months after the closure of the borders that direct talks between officials from the two countries began. Two meetings were held in early July 1973, the first in Syria, in Jdeidet Yabous near the Lebanese-Syrian border, and the second in the town of Shtaura near Zahleh. The Lebanese delegation was headed by Fouad Naffah, Lebanon's foreign minister in the newly-formed cabinet of Takieddin al-Solh; it included the Foreign Ministry's secretary-general Najib Sadaka and Lebanese Army Intelligence chief Colonel Jules Boustany. The Syrian delegation included Foreign Minister 'Abdul-Halim Khaddam and Syrian Army Intelligence Chief Colonel Hikmat al-Shihabi.

Minister Khaddam listed four items on the agenda: the Palestinian Resistance, Syrian workers in Lebanon, the Lebanese press and Syria's national security.⁵⁵ Lebanese officials, for their part, had mainly economic issues to discuss, namely, the transit trade via Syria to the Arab countries, the distribution of water of the Orontes River (al-'Assi), the Beirut-Riyah-Damascus railroad and the economic measures taken by the Syrian government which affected the interests of several hundred Lebanese based in Syria.

For the Lebanese government, there was no justification for closing the borders between the two countries. Such harsh measures, Naffah explained, did not take place even between two enemy regimes. To that Khaddam replied that Syria's intention was to reach an agreement with the Lebanese government over the issues that divided them. The first concerned the Palestinian Resistance in Lebanon. Khaddam stressed that the Palestinians should be protected and the 'Palestinian identity should be strengthened, for this will help the Arab cause in its struggle against Israel'.⁵⁶ Naffah replied by stating that the Lebanese government has never sought to liquidate the Palestinian Resistance and that such accusations were baseless. He then said that Syria seemed more concerned about the Palestinians than the

Palestinians themselves. Colonel Boustany then provided a detailed account of the activities of radical Palestinian groups since 1972 and their attempts to destabilise the country.⁵⁷

The other issue raised by Khaddam concerned Syrian workers in Lebanon.⁵⁸ Khaddam demanded that they receive full work benefits in accordance with the Lebanese labour law as well as health insurance. To that demand, Naffah replied that the issue would be studied after the exact number of Syrian workers in Lebanon had been determined. Naffah stressed that work benefits can be discussed in principle, but offering health coverage to thousands of Syrian workers, at a time when most Lebanese workers were not covered, was virtually impossible. It would represent a financial burden which the Lebanese government could not bear, nor could such a measure be justified politically.

The third issue discussed was Syria's national security.⁵⁹ While co-ordination between the two governments on criminal matters went smoothly, Damascus sought to broaden the scope of this co-ordination to include political crimes. Khaddam demanded that Syrian security officials should be able to enter Lebanon and detain people whom Syrian authorities accuse of plotting against Syria's national security. Naffah replied by stating the willingness of the Lebanese security authorities to co-operate on an individual basis, but that he could not commit himself in a written agreement on matters having to do with political crimes, which are difficult to define. This, Naffah explained, would constitute a violation of Lebanese law. Colonel Shihabi then proposed a secret co-ordination and not a written agreement. But this was rejected by Naffah who stressed that the Lebanese government would take the necessary measures against these people within the confines of the Lebanese legal system. For Damascus, the concern at the time was the opposition movement to the Syrian regime by the Muslim Brotherhood and its leader Issam al-'Attar, who was based in Lebanon.

The final issue had to do with the Lebanese press.⁶⁰ According to Khaddam, Lebanon's press attacked the Syrian regime and its armed forces and was thus doing harm to Lebanese-Syrian relations. Khaddam proposed three alternatives: (i) change the press law in Lebanon; (ii) threaten those who criticise Syria with severe punishment, and (iii) publication in the Syrian press of stories that would create scandals for many Lebanese

politicians. Naffah stated that the Lebanese government could not apply censorship, nor could it change the law to suit particular interests. The press in Lebanon, Naffah explained, was more critical of the Lebanese government than of other governments and that Lebanon was unable to do anything to change it. All the government could do was to enforce the existing press law. And, if the Syrian press, Naffah continued, wanted to criticise Lebanese politicians it was free to do so.

The Lebanese delegation, for its part, raised non-political issues aimed at strengthening economic co-operation between the two countries. Najib Sadaka explained in detail the technical dimensions of these issues, notably the water distribution of the Orontes River along the Lebanese-Syrian border and transit trade. Minister Khaddam proposed to study these issues in the Syrian-Lebanese economic committee which was formed in 1971. It was also agreed to reactivate the committee, which had not met since January 1972.

Lebanese officials went to Syria with the assumption that the most divisive issue was Lebanese government policy towards the Palestinians in the aftermath of the 1973 events.⁶¹ Syria's closure of the borders was interpreted as a way of putting pressure on the Lebanese government to prevent any drastic military action against the guerrillas. But it turned out that the issue of the Palestinians in Lebanon was only a minor concern for Syrian officials. It was mainly a pretext that Damascus used to discuss bilateral relations and to propose policies regarding specific political, economic and security matters.⁶² While in 1973 Syrian demands served immediate political purposes and were dropped later on, they nonetheless revealed Syria's long-term policy objectives in Lebanon.

In fewer than four weeks, the Syrian position alternated from an intermediary role between the Lebanese government and the Palestinians, to an accommodating approach towards Lebanon, to an escalation of rhetoric against the Lebanese authorities, and finally to a breakdown in relations between the two countries. What the Syrian regime had in store for Lebanon in 1973 was political and military blackmail. This was a way of announcing Syria's forceful comeback to the Lebanese scene after an undesired temporary absence of a few years. During much of the 1960s Damascus had little influence in Lebanon. Lebanon's close relations with

Cairo denied Damascus direct access to Lebanese politics. By 1973, however, the rules of the game had changed. Syria's Asad had become an active Arab power and Lebanon was more vulnerable to Arab influences.

In 1973, Syria had several means to intervene in Lebanon. Most effective were its client organisations within the PLO. In addition to Sa'iqa, Syria was in a position to influence other groups, such as DFLP and the PFLP-GC. Another instrument of pressure at Syria's disposal was the Syrian-based Hittin Brigade of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) as well as the Yarmouk Brigade, created from Fateh elements in the aftermath of the Jordan war.⁶³ Syria also could influence Lebanese politics by using local 'pressure groups', such as the Lebanese branch of the pro-Syrian Ba'th Party and other Leftist and Arab nationalist parties. The 1973 crisis enabled it to mobilise its clients and to test the effectiveness of its network in Lebanon.

Political Denouement The ending of the Syrian and Palestinian dimensions of the crisis paved the way for ending the cabinet crisis. Like in 1969, internal accord was possible only after the external components of the crisis were addressed. Internally, Frangiyeh was not on good terms with the two leading candidates for the premiership: Sa'eb Salam and Rashid Karame. Karame was in the opposition and was instrumental in unseating Amin al-Hafiz, while Salam's feud with Frangiyeh was only a few weeks old. A 'non-partisan' veteran Sunni politician, Takiyeddin al-Solh, provided a middle ground alternative.

A former deputy and minister, Solh was backed by major Christian and Muslim leaders and earned lukewarm support from Damascus.⁶⁴ He was

the best candidate for a badly-needed cabinet of national unity'. On 8 July 1973, Solh announced the formation of a politically balanced cabinet. With 20 members representing major parliamentary blocs, the Solh cabinet was the largest since independence. It rightly earned the label of 'the government of the entire country'.⁶⁵

It was during the presidential consultations that preceded the formation of the Solh cabinet that the issue of power-sharing made political headway. Originally a Sunni demand, power-sharing, like other controversial issues in Lebanon, took on a life of its own and became a multi-communal demand advocated by several Lebanese communities.⁶⁶ Having formed a cabinet in which almost all leaders and parties had a stake, including Kamal Jumblatt, Solh was able to neutralise any kind of strong opposition. As the crisis with the PLO ended, relations with Syria stabilised, and a new cabinet was formed, Lebanese politicians were ready for a summer break – later extended by a few more months with the outbreak of the fourth Arab–Israeli war in October 1973.

Notes

- 1 According to Lebanese Army sources the raid went on for about 40 minutes. Another Lebanese security source claims that the raid lasted about 20 to 25 minutes. Details on the raid can be found in *al-Nahar*, 10 (3rd edition) and 17 April 1973.
- 2 See report by the Army Intelligence Chief Jules Fouad Boustany, *Aqdar wa Tawaqua't* (Beirut: n.p., 1980): 115–22.
- 3 Interview with a high-ranking Lebanese internal security officer in 1973, who did not want to be named, 10 February 1997.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Boustany, *Aqdar...*, pp. 115–22.
- 6 Interview with a high-ranking Lebanese internal security officer in 1973, who did not want to be named, 10 February 1997.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid 12 Interview with Shafiq al-Hout, 14 August 1994.
- 13 Lebanese Army Report, 'Taqqim al-Wad'... ', p.9.
- 14 *Al-Nahar*, 15 April 1973.
- 15 Ibid. The lack of adequate security measures was confirmed by Abu Iyad, *My Home...*, p.114.
- 16 Kamal Salibi writes that prior to the Israeli raid, relations between Salam and Frangiyeh were strained, as a result of a remark that Salam made in Algiers in March that 'the premier in Lebanon was the true head of the executive, and that the president of the republic was merely a formal head of state, entitled to no more real power than the Queen of England', *Crossroads...*, p.66. For another indication of the Salam–Frangiyeh feud, see Gorla, *Sovereignty...*, p.154. (fn. 136) and p. 155 (fn. 159) 17 Gorla, Ibid., p. 155. (fn. 163) 18 Taqqim al-Wad'... p.9.
- 19 *Al-Nahar*, 15 April 1973.
- 20 Ibid., 29 April 1973.
- 21 'Taqqim al-Wad'... ', p. 10
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid., p. 13.
- 26 In a detailed report prepared by Fateh on the events of May 1973, and secured from Egyptian authorities by *al-Nahar* correspondent Fuad Mattar, 'undisciplined elements' belonging to Hawatmeh's DFLP were accused of having provoked the clashes with the Lebanese army by kidnapping three army soldiers. The report compared these incidents to those that occurred in Jordan which gave the pretexts for the final crackdown on the Palestinian forces by the Jordanian army. The report, which appeared on two consecutive days in *alNahar*, 12, 13 June 1973, gave a balanced assessment of Palestinian-Lebanese and Palestinian-Syrian relations and presented broad guidelines for the future. Fateh issued a denial of the report (June 13) and

claimed that it was prepared by a 'private research institution outside of Beirut and presented to a local Fateh office, and that it did not represent Fateh's position'. It also denied the involvement of Hawatmeh's and Jibril's organisations in instigating the clashes in May 1973. The curious thing was that, in the denial, Jibril's group was listed while in the report itself there was no mention of Jibril's involvement. The denial came at a time of intense conflict between Fateh and radical Palestinian organisations.

- 27 Interview with General Jules Boustany, 26 March 1996.
- 28 *Al-Nahar*, 9 May 1973.
- 29 Gorla, *Sovereignty...*, p. 144.
- 30 *Al-Nahar*, 6 May 1973.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 3 May 1973.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 3 May 1973.
- 33 Gorla, *Sovereignty...*, pp. 144–45.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p.144. See also *al-Tali'a*, May 1973, pp. 5–11 and June 1973, pp. 5–9.
- 35 Assessment given by a former high ranking army officer who did not want to be identified. It was confirmed by other sources. Interview with Michel Samaha, 8 November 1997.
- 36 *Al-Nahar*, 9, 10 May 1973.
- 37 Interview with Munah al-Solh, 23 September 1995.
- 38 *Al-Nahar*, 8 May 1973.
- 39 *Ibid.* They were detained by the Lebanese army and then released.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 9 May 1973.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 4 May 1973. See also 'Taqqim al-Wad'...', p.15.
- 42 *Ibid.*
- 43 *Al-Nahar*, 10 May 1973.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 14 May 1973.
- 45 The text of Mahmoud Riad's assessment of the situation in 1973 is in Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, pp.318–20. See also 'Taqqim al-Wad'...', Annex A.
- 46 Helou, vol. II, *Mémoires...*, p.319.
- 47 *Al-Nahar*, 18 May 1973.
- 48 For the text of the Melkart Agreement, See Yehuda Lukacs (ed.). *Documents on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1967–1983* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984): 216–19.
- 49 Lebanese Army Report, 'Taqqim al-Wad'...', pp. 18–19.
- 50 *Ibid.*, pp.20–3.
- 51 *Al-Nahar*, 3 May 1973.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 4 June 1973.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 5 June 1973.
- 54 For details on Syrian demands, see *Al-Nahar*, 5 and 6 June 1973.
- 55 Interview with Fouad Naffah, 8 June 1996.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 *Ibid.*
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 *Ibid.*

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 On the PLA after Jordan, See Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity...*, pp.244–6.

64 Interview with Munah al-Solh, 23 September 1995.

65 *Al-Nahar*, 23 June 1973.

66 See statements made by several leaders on the issue of power-sharing in *Al-Nahar*, Shia and Greek Orthodox demands (4 July 1973), Druze and Maronite demands (12, 17 July 1973).

16

The Aftershocks of the 1973 War and Lebanese Politics, 1974

Like the developments which marked the Arab world in the early 1970s (the Jordan war, Asad's take-over in Syria, Nasser's death) and gave Lebanon a breathing space, the Arab-Israeli war in 1973 gave it a respite from regional turmoil. While the 1967 war resulted in corporate Arab defeat, the 1973 war resulted in significant military and political achievements for the confrontation states. It was more difficult to share in the glory of victory rather than in the humiliation of defeat. The uncharted path of the 1973 war was aptly described by Fouad Ajami: In a curious way, the defeat of 1967 was better handled in the Arab world than the so-called victory of 1973 ... The 'victory' in October, 1973, proved more difficult to control, more difficult to live with ... The world brought about by October 1973 blew away the cobwebs of Arab society. Buffeted by mighty winds and propelled by temptations and possibilities unknown before, its cultural container ruptured. It strutted on the world stage for a brief moment; then the breakdown came. There were great victories on distant stages and paralysing wounds at home. A world seemed to back into the past because the new terrain looked unfamiliar as old verities were challenged, old limits broken and violated.¹

Problems in post-1973 Arab politics were generated by the difficulty of dividing up the spoils of victory. Those leaders who claimed credit for achieving victory were now in a position to distance themselves from the burden of past debacles. They were the new self-made heroes of an invigorated Arab order. In the 1973 war, most Arab countries shared in the

making of victory. Presidents, kings, revolutionaries and oil-producers joined hands for the cause. But once the guns fell silent, they all stood back and felt that they had a right to rest and to explore new alternatives for the future.

One immediate fallout of the 1973 war was the problem of reconciling the delusions of victors and the illusions of vanquished. Attempts at reconciling the views and priorities of the protagonists formed the substance of the post-1973 peace process. The architect of peace-making was American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. His 'shuttle diplomacy' between Syria, Egypt and Israel resulted in one of the most unsettled legacies in the Arab-Israeli conflict in its post-1973 phase. But little could have happened in the mid-1970s were it not for the inconclusive military outcome of the 1973 war. This gave room for manoeuvring and bargaining for all parties concerned. For both Israel and the Arab countries, the ambivalent outcome that characterised the 1973 war facilitated the conduct of a special sort of diplomacy and paved the way for a special sort of deal. No one had a deeper understanding of this unusual setting than Kissinger.² And no one was willing to explore the possibilities afforded by the newly-created facts more than Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

By contrast, Syria's Asad, whose army could not be credited for any kind of heroic 'crossing' was not in a position to embark on hasty deals similar to those made between Egypt and Israel. Nor was there a possibility for an extended step-by-step diplomacy and incremental border adjustments similar to those that existed between Egypt and Israel.³ The long stretches of desert land in Sinai differed from the much smaller Golan Heights. Similarly, the geographic distance between Damascus and Israel was much smaller than between Cairo and Tel Aviv. Nor was Alawite-ruled Syria the Egypt of one man at the helm, be it Nasser or Sadat. The political, geographic and communal landscape of the two countries was radically different.

Palestinian Options After the 1973 War Absent in all these schemes were the Palestinians. They had neither a decision to make in the war nor a role to play in its political outcome. The PLO, like Lebanon in the

aftermath of the 1967 war, entered the post-1973 era through the back door. Almost overnight, the PLO found itself placed at the centre of Arab-Israeli politics, but with no adequate resources or power to match its new-found role. Palestinian leaders, barely prepared as they were, had to adapt to the changes generated by the war. They had to redefine their objectives and undertake the formidable task of uniting their ranks.

After the 1973 war, the PLO had to formulate a policy towards the upcoming Geneva peace conference sponsored by the two superpowers. The debate reflected divergent views within the PLO. The differences and uncertainties which characterised PLO politics during that period were outlined in a series of four analytical essays by Yusif Sayigh, former head of the PLO Planning Centre.⁴

After describing how the 1973 war put the Palestinians in an unprecedented predicament since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, Sayigh gave a thorough assessment of Palestinian options in the light of the political and military developments brought about by the war. For him, the acceptance of the United Nations Security Council resolution 338, the cease-fire with Israel and the implementation of resolution 242 was indicative of Egypt's and Syria's limited political objectives from the 1973 war. This, wrote Sayigh, would translate into a de facto Arab recognition of Israel within well-defined and secure borders. He then noted that in the UN resolution 242, the Palestinian cause was reduced to that of a problem of homeless refugees, and that under the best of circumstances, 242 would imply the withdrawal of Israel only from the West Bank and Gaza. Were this to happen, Sayigh argued, Palestinian national objectives to build a democratic society in a 'liberated Palestine stretching between the [Mediterranean] sea and the [Jordan] river' would be undermined.⁵ Therefore, he continued, Palestinian participation in the Geneva peace conference had two damaging consequences: self-negation of Palestinian

national aspirations, and Palestinian recognition of Israel within the framework of the resolutions of the conference.

Sayigh then analysed the three options that were available to the PLO: participation in the Geneva conference (the 'yes' option), rejection of the proposal (the 'no' option), or adoption of a middle ground approach. After evaluating the merits of each option, as debated by the advocates and the critics of each one of them, Sayigh rejected the 'yes' option, and argued for the exploration of the intermediate, non-committal option. But even this, according to Sayigh, would result in a marginal achievement while leaving the core aspect of the problem unresolved.

Of particular significance in this reading by a Palestinian intellectual not particularly known for maximalism, was his favouring of the hard-line option, though he considered the middle ground option to be worthy of further debate. The 'no' option was favoured because 'it was the least committal for the PLO in view of Palestinian ultimate objectives of establishing a sovereign state in all of Palestine'.⁶ As for the argument in favour of the peace conference, it was rejected on the grounds that an accommodationist approach with Israel would not weaken the Jewish state, nor would it help eradicate Zionism.⁷

Underlying Sayigh's unyielding position was the assumption that the Arab masses (*al-jamahir*) could be mobilised to pursue the struggle for the liberation of Palestine. For this reason, Sayigh argued that the PLO should not fall into the trap of relinquishing the historical rights of the Palestinian people in regaining Palestine.⁸ Any partial settlement was viewed as compromising Palestinian rights – a first step towards relinquishing Palestinian claims over historic Palestine.

The PLO had to grapple with another problem that emerged after the 1973 war: making an orderly transition from a 'free-rider' guerrilla movement to one which could serve as the nucleus for a government-in-exile. The Arab Summit in Algiers, the changing policies of the two superpowers, and the Geneva conference were events to which the Palestinian leadership had to respond. In these endeavours, Soviet support for the PLO was instrumental. Arafat's visit to Moscow in mid-November 1973 strengthened the Palestinian position in Arab politics as well as in the larger Arab-Israeli power equation.⁹ Moreover, while the sixth Arab summit meeting held in Algiers by the end of November 1973 was dominated by the Jordanian-

Palestinian dispute, the PLO obtained Arab recognition (excluding Jordan) as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.¹⁰

The strategic change that resulted from the 1973 war involved the military disengagements between the front-line states.¹¹ Negotiations for the first disengagement between Egypt and Israel began in November 1973. An agreement was reached in mid-January 1974 and was signed by the respective chiefs of staff of the two countries. Four months later, in May 1974, another American-negotiated disengagement agreement in the Golan Heights was signed between Syria and Israel.

Although the second disengagement between Egypt and Israel (Sinai II) did not materialise until a year later (September 1975), Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy laid the groundwork for a *de facto* step-by-step marginalisation of the Palestinian dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the process, Lebanon, the last remaining stronghold of the PLO, was greatly affected by this strategic transformation in the regional balance of power. Both Lebanon and the PLO were excluded from Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy. Lebanon did not take part in the 1973 war. The PLO was an outsider to Arab-Israeli wars and an entity yet to be recognised by many countries, let alone by the United States and Israel.

The most that Lebanon could get was a brief stopover on 16 December 1973 of a few hours by Kissinger in Lebanon's military airport in Rayaq, where he was met by the president, the prime minister, the foreign minister and by other government officials. The purpose of the visit was to discuss Lebanon's participation in the Geneva talks, prior to the launching of American mediation. Lebanese leaders raised the question of final borders between Lebanon and Israel and the settlement of the Palestinian problem.¹² Kissinger did not go into detail about these issues and gave no commitment as to the settlement of the Palestinian problem.¹³ All Kissinger and, by implication, the American administration seemed willing to do was lament. As Kissinger put it: 'I did not have the heart to tell President Frangiyeh that, from what I had heard in the Middle East, he was unlikely to obtain relief from his devouring guests.'¹⁴ Since then no other trip was made by an American secretary of state until after the 1975–76 war. This reflected the upper ceiling of America's marginal interest and lack of initiative in Lebanon one year prior to the outbreak of war.

Another development was the call for the creation of an Independent National Authority in the Occupied Territories (al-Sulta al-Wataniyya al-Mustaqilla).¹⁵ It was proclaimed at the 12th Palestinian National Council held in Cairo in early June 1974 and marked a qualitative change in PLO strategy. Now there was a well-defined political stand with which the PLO identified, and on the basis of which it could enter eventual negotiation. Of equal significance was that 1974 marked the beginning of the 'statist' phase in Palestinian politics. It was a year of political and diplomatic achievements, which greatly enhanced the PLO's international standing. In October, the PLO won a major political battle against King Hussein. At the Arab Summit meeting in Rabat, the PLO earned full Arab recognition as 'the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.' A month later, it scored a diplomatic breakthrough when Yasir Arafat addressed the United Nations General Assembly. Also in 1974, the PLO embarked on a successful public relations campaign, particularly in Western Europe, where it began to establish unofficial permanent representations.¹⁶

The PLO's Strategic Trenches in Lebanon At a time of superpower diplomacy, the PLO had to make the necessary adaptation to become an acceptable participant in regional politics and to gain the trust of its supporters and the respect of its adversaries. This change was particularly apparent in the moderate political discourse of Fateh whose leaders were aware that they had vital interests at stake which they could not afford to gamble with. What was acquired by non-violent means could not be jeopardised by irresponsible acts at the hands of extremist groups who had little to lose.¹⁷ This explains the policy of restraint pursued by Fateh in Lebanon in the first half

of 1974, when the final outcome of American-sponsored negotiations between Arab countries and Israel was not yet clear to all parties.

By the mid-1970s there remained an open forum and an autonomous base in Lebanon to which the PLO had relatively unhindered access. For the PLO, Lebanon gained additional strategic value in the midst of a rapidly changing regional balance of power. As the Lebanese state strove to preserve the country's sovereignty and strategic position, the PLO sought to consolidate its acquired 'state' prerogatives in Lebanon. The PLO was the prime beneficiary of this state of affairs. Whatever interests Arab countries and superpowers had in Lebanon in the 1970s, they were less linked to Lebanon itself than to what Lebanon contained: the major political, military and economic base of the PLO, and the home of one of the largest Palestinian populations outside historic Palestine.¹⁸

Careful not to endanger its newly acquired 'statist' standing, the PLO and specifically Fateh, saw in the relative stability of Lebanon an important asset for the preservation and promotion of Palestinian national interests. Like an investor forced to enter risky ventures in the absence of safer investment outlets, the PLO, having put its lifetime 'savings' in Lebanon, found it necessary to prevent its Lebanon 'bank' from default to protect its own investments.

It was this kind of last resort reasoning which made Fateh leaders opt for moderation in their dealings with the Lebanese government in early 1974 and to show restraint in military operations against Israel from Lebanese territory. They must have realised that the war of attrition which followed the 1967 war was brought to an end in 1973, and that the disengagements between Arab and Israeli armies would eventually shift Israeli attention to 'Fateh land' in south Lebanon. Such a concern was echoed in the political discourse of Fateh leaders who stressed the need to avoid giving Israel pretexts to attack Lebanon.¹⁹

This cautious attitude mirrored a growing Palestinian fear of being driven into the trap (*al-shark*) not only by Israel but also by Arab regimes seeking to control the PLO through the destabilisation of Lebanon.²⁰ After the 1973 war, the PLO could no longer call on Arab countries to come to its defence

when they ceased to be engaged in warfare with Israel. And the PLO now faced a number of powerful competitors, notably two war heroes (Sadat and Asad), who claimed equally credible revolutionary deeds.

PLO-Israeli Warfare and its Repercussions for Lebanon PLO commando operations inside Israel, however, continued and were the kinds of pretext Israel was looking for to carry out raids in Lebanon. Beginning in April, a new wave of violence was set in motion claiming the lives of hundreds of civilians. Between April and June, Israel carried out massive indiscriminate air raids causing heavy casualties.²¹ These raids were in retaliation to three commando operations against civilian targets in Israel, Kiryat Shmona, Ma'alot and Nahariya. These attacks occurred at a delicate time, when Kissinger was about to conclude the disengagement agreement between Syria and Israel.²² They were the deed of the PFLP-GC and Hawatmeh's DFLP, the two major organisations forming the 'rejectionist front' (*jabhat al-rafd*) which opposed American-negotiated military disengagements. Following the Ma'alot attack, Hawatmeh asserted that his goal was 'to abort Kissinger's mission' in the region.²³

At that time, Syria along with its client organisation, Sa'iqa, were not identified with the rejectionist front. Nor had Fateh and PFLP taken a strong stand on the issue. Although the PFLP-GC and the DFLP were at odds,²⁴

their operations against Israel were aimed at undermining the position of the parties which stood to benefit from a temporary halt in commando operations, namely Syria and Fateh. Both groups had ties with Libya and Iraq, the two Arab regimes that had nothing to lose from maximalism in 1974. Indeed, the more rejectionist they were the more they stood to gain, particularly Iraq, Syria's main rival. As for Qaddafi in far away Libya, maximalism was his daily political bread both in Lebanese and Arab politics.

Radical Palestinian organisations were also behind the clashes that erupted on 27 July near the Tal-Za'tar camp in the Beirut suburb of Dikwaneh. Military confrontations opposed elements from the PFLP-GC and local supporters of the Kataeb Party.²⁵ Clashes went on for three consecutive days but were confined to the camp area. Although limited in scope, these clashes resulted in a new kind of security arrangement: the formation of a joint Lebanese, Palestinian and Kataeb security force. The arrangement was criticised by Lebanese politicians, notably by Raymond Eddé.²⁶ It set a precedent in the handling of crises involving the guerrillas. In fact, it meant *de facto* state recognition of the 'right' of two non-state actors, the PLO and the Kataeb Party, to enforce the law alongside government forces.

In mid-1974, the defence of Palestinian camps from Israeli air raids became an issue of internal debate. The acquisition of weapons by the guerrillas was done through smuggling operations from Syria into Lebanon.²⁷ With the intensification of Israeli air raids, Syria established an air defence system in Palestinian camps.²⁸ This was done at the request of Arafat, who called upon Asad to intervene with Frangiyeh to allow the stationing of an air defence system in the Tal-Za'tar camp,²⁹ operated by a Syrian military unit composed of twenty-one men.³⁰ Moreover, units of the Qadisiyya Brigade entered the camps, but this time with the knowledge of the Lebanese authorities.³¹ Lebanon was not only unable to defend Palestinian camps from Israeli air raids but was equally unable to defend the civilian population.

In a somewhat similar move aimed at strengthening the defence of the south, the PLO started to build underground shelters in a number of camps. This was in line with the decisions of the Arab Joint Defence Council meeting in Cairo.³² This project, to which Arab countries contributed 40 million Lebanese pounds,³³ was the first major official Arab funding of PLO

military infrastructure in Lebanon. In the absence of other alternatives, the Lebanese government acquiesced to these measures. Obviously, the PLO was not relying only on Arab goodwill and money to either build underground shelters or to acquire weapons. Rather, the decision had a symbolic significance, for it meant Arab recognition of Palestinian rights to take necessary measures for self-defence.

In another development, in the Arab summit meeting in Rabat in October 1974, the Lebanese president was delegated to address the United Nations General Assembly in November. The high level delegation which accompanied Frangiyeh to New York³⁴ symbolised not only a strong endorsement for the Palestinian cause but an equally strong Lebanese consensus regarding the need for a comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict and, specifically, to its Palestinian core.

The Military Build-up In 1974 the 'militaristic' mood in the country was on the rise. In March Lebanon's communal politics witnessed an unprecedented development: the 'militarisation' of Shia grievances. In a massive rally held in the Beqa city of Ba'albak, Musa alSadr proclaimed the Shia revolt against deprivation. Addressing thousands of supporters, Sadr declared that 'arms are an adornment of men' (*al-silah zinat alrijal*). As Sadr launched the Movement of the Deprived, his followers acquired weapons and began to train by Fateh near Ba'albak.

The arms build-up involving Lebanese and Palestinian groups continued. Tension was particularly high among some groups. On 22 September 1974, clashes took place in the village of Tarshish in the Upper Matn region between local followers of Kamal Jumblatt and members of the Kataeb Party celebrating the opening of a local party office in the village.³⁵ Three people were killed and two injured. Although this confrontation was confined to

local village feuds, it was indicative of a growing mood of radicalism and intolerance in the country. Another incident took place in Sidon where a Lebanese policeman shot a guerrilla. Subsequently, Palestinian gunmen erected barricades and explosives were detonated in various parts of the city. In Beirut, an armed dispute took place between factions of a Nasserite group. This was the ambush of the convoy of Nasserite deputy Najah Wakim by gunmen, resulting in the injury of four people. This factional feud mirrored the conflicting interests of Palestinian and Arab supporters of several Nasserite groups operating in the country.³⁶ Among those implicated in the ambush was Ibrahim Qleilat,³⁷ who later led the al-Murabitun, the largest Fateh-backed Sunni militia during the war.

In September 1974 Prime Minister Takieddin al-Solh sought to maintain cohesion in his cabinet. Nearly fifteen months in office, Solh's national unity' cabinet now lacked unity. The dispute dividing the government coalition was the failure to implement a ban on firearms. Lebanese security forces detained people from various groups accused of illegal possession of firearms. But this was a 'political gesture' to neutralise government critics, notably Jumblatt who was represented in the cabinet by the Minister of the Interior Bahij Takieddin. Jumblatt was the most vocal critic of government policies. He also accused Pierre Gemayel and Camille Chamoun, who were also represented in the cabinet, of acquiring weapons and training militia units, while conspiring against the Palestinians.³⁸ Responding to these accusations, Gemayel and Chamoun accused Jumblatt of having an arsenal in his hometown in Mukhtara and of being the 'biggest conspirator against the Palestinian people'.³⁹

In reality, however, no one was in a position to accuse the other of an arms build-up. In 1974 all parties, Lebanese and Palestinian, acquired weapons and were engaged in military training. Following the 1969 events, Kataeb Party members were involved in occasional military training. The turning point, however, occurred after the 1973 confrontations between the Lebanese army and PLO forces, when Christian-based parties began to acquire heavy weapons and were engaged in organised training.⁴⁰ The most organised and disciplined Christian-based party was the Kataeb. With its para-military structure and large following in various parts of the country, the Kataeb Party was, as Frank Stoakes indicated, 'a valuable auxiliary of the state' and always ready to come to its defence in times of crisis.⁴¹ Other parties began

to organise militarily, notably Chamoun's National Liberal Party and a small elitist group of young professionals called al-Tanzim, headed by physician Fouad Chemali.

Lebanese parties, of all persuasions, Christian and Muslim, Left and Right, lagged behind the PLO. Not only did they lack a similar military and security infrastructure, they had limited financial resources.⁴² Leftist and Muslim-based parties operated closely with the PLO and received financial and military support from Arab countries, notably Libya, Syria and Iraq. Christian-based parties, for their part, relied mainly on private financial support.⁴³ They also received military assistance, beginning in 1973, from the Lebanese army, which consisted of training and light weapons.⁴⁴

The most impressive political, propaganda and military infrastructure was that of the PLO. In 1974 no fewer than ten Palestinian organisations were actively operating in Lebanon. They possessed a military and political infrastructure in Lebanon's five provinces. Tables 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.4 and 16.5 show the distribution and uses of offices (centres of operations) run by PLO organisations by the end of 1974. Offices were used for political, security, military, propaganda and surveillance purposes. In Beirut, there were 100 offices (37 run by Fateh, 12 by Sa'iqa, 12 by PFLP-GC) with about half of them used for military and security purposes, as shown in Table 16.1.

Mount Lebanon had 34 offices. Of these Sa'iqa had 13 while Fateh had 12, as shown in Table 16.4. North Lebanon had the lowest number of offices. Only four organisations were dominant. In the Beqa, there were 43 offices. More than half of these were under Fateh control, as shown in Table 16.3. Most were used for military purposes. The Arab Liberation Front and the PFLP-GC had the largest number of offices, as shown in Table 16.5. Of the 280 offices located throughout the country, only 40 were located inside the camps, with 26 in Beirut and its suburbs and 14 in the south, as shown in Table 16.6. Five Palestinian organisations occupied the vast majority of these offices: Fateh, Sa'iqa, PFLP, PFLP-GC and DFLP. Fateh had the lion's share with 101 offices out of 280.

The PLO military capabilities on the eve of the war surpassed those of all armed Lebanese groups combined. The number and distribution of forces and weapons in Lebanon's fifteen camps as well as in other military bases is shown in Table 16.7. The militia force numbered 11,698 men. The largest number were in the 'Ayn alHelweh camp (2,300), followed by Sabra and

Shatila, al-Rashidiyeh and Tal-Za'tar respectively. Heavy weapons of different calibres were in all camps, particularly in 'Ayn al-Helweh, al-Rashidiyeh and Tal-Za'tar.

The Resignation of the Takiyeddin al-Solh Cabinet Faced by internal unrest and by PLO-Israeli warfare, the Takiyeddin al-Solh cabinet was able to weather the storm for more than a year. Solh maintained good relations with Frangiyeh. His task was facilitated partly because Jumblatt helped appease government critics, particularly among his Leftist supporters,⁴⁵ and partly because the full political repercussions of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war had not yet clearly materialised. In October 1974, the Solh cabinet was no longer viable.

Table 16.1 Distribution and Uses of PLO Offices in Beirut (1974)

	Fateh	Sa'iqa	PFLP-GC	DFLP	PFLP	Jabhat Tahrir	PLA	Quwat Tahrir	Nidal Sha'bi	Popular Revolutionary Front	Total
Surveillance	13	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	16
Leader House	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Leader/Qiyadi	2	2	1	2	2	1	-	1	1	1	13
Secret Surveillance	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Storeroom/Armoury	2	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	5
Assembly	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Covert Popular	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Information	2	1	1	2	2	6	-	-	-	-	14
Research	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Camp Office	2	-	1	-	1	1	3	2	-	2	12
Military	5	4	8	4	3	-	-	2	-	-	26
Security	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Military Camp	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Platoon	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Jail	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Normal	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Command of Rejectionist Front	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Dormitory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Total	37	17	12	9	11	8	3	8	2	3	110

Platoon = Faseel *Source:* Lebanese Army Intelligence.

Table 16.2 Distribution and Uses of PLO Offices in the South (1974)

	Fateh	ALF	Sa'iqa	PFLP-GC	PFLP	Different Orgs	Jabhat Nidal Sha'bi	Kifah Musallah	DFLP	PLA	Total
Military & Armoury	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Dormitory & Armoury	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Surveillance & Reconnaissance	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	
Armoury	4	4	5	1	2	1	-	-	3	-	20
Storeroom	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Office	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Dormitory	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3
Assembly	-	-	1	-	4	-	1	1	-	-	7
Political	4	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
Co-ordination	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Information	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
Training	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3
Operations Centre	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Surveillance	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Office & Armoury	6	1	4	1	1	7	1	-	1	1	23
Total	25	9	15	4	9	9	2	1	4	1	79

Source: Lebanese Army Intelligence.

Table 16.3 Distribution and Uses of PLO Offices in the Beqa (1974)

Organisation	Fateh	PFLP	Sa'iqa	PLO	PFLP-GC	ALF	Different Organisations	Total
Intelligence	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Political/Information	9	1	2	1	1	-	-	14
Military	4	1	-	-	2	1	-	8
Armoury	9	2	2	-	2	1	1	17
Training Centre	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Office	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Total	25	4	5	1	5	2	1	43

Source: Lebanese Army Intelligence Report.

Table 16.4 Distribution and Uses of PLO Offices in Mount Lebanon (1974)

	Fateh	Sa'iqa	DFLP	PFLP	Palestine Liberation Front	Total
Political	3	3	-	-	1	7
Training	-	1	-	-	-	1
Not Specified	-	1	-	-	-	1
Reserve	-	3	-	-	-	3
Educational	1	-	-	-	-	2
Political & Armoury	6	3	7	1	-	17
Educational & Assembly	1	-	-	-	-	1
Armoury	1	2	-	-	-	3
Total	12	13	7	1	1	34

Source: Lebanese Army Intelligence Report.

Table 16.5 Distribution and Uses of PLO Offices in the North (1974)

	Arab Liberation Front				Total
	Front	Fateh	DFLP	PFLP-GC	
Political, Information & Financial	1		1		2
Planning	2	1	–	3	6
Information & Financial	1	1	–	–	2
Planning & Information	1	–	–	1	2
Planning & Financial	–	–	1	–	1
Financial	–	–	1	–	1
Total	5	2	3	4	14

Source: Lebanese Army Intelligence Report.

Table 16.6 Distribution of PLO Offices Inside and Outside the Camps (1974)

	Outside Camps	Inside Camps	Total
Beirut	84	26	110
South	65	14	79
Beqa	43	0	43
Mount Lebanon	34	0	34
North	14	0	14
Total	240	40	280

Source: Lebanese Army Intelligence Report.

Table 16.7 Distribution of Forces and Weapons in Palestinian Camps and Military Bases (1974)

Camp	Militia Force	Mortar 120	Mortar 81	Mortar 60	Cannon 75	Doshka Mch. Gun	Krinof Mch. Gun	Rpg	Mach. Gun 12.7	Cannon
Al-Barid	850	2	6	1	1	3	6	12	–	–
Al-Baddawi	400	3	6	3	1	3	6	13	1	1
Dbayeh	400	–	1	3	–	2	3	7	–	–
Tal-Za'tar	1100	3	7	10	3	7	7	35	4	3
Jisr al-Basha	100	–	1	2	–	1	2	7	–	–
Tirbit al-Daouq	50	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Mar Elias	398	–	1	1	–	1	2	4	–	–
Sabra & Shatila	1350	3	9	8	4	9	9	45	5	4
Boij al-Barajneh	800	2	5	7	2	6	6	25	3	2
Mieh wa Mieh	200	3	4	5	2	2	3	10	1	3
'Ayn el-Helweh	2300	11	11	15	4	9	5	50	3	6
Nabatiyeh	500	2	4	3	–	2	3	15	1	3
Al Qasimiyya wa al-Borghaliya	150	–	1	2	–	1	2	7	–	2
Shabriha wa al-Ma'shnuq	150	–	–	1	–	–	2	4	–	2
Al-Buss	250	1	2	3	1	1	3	9	–	2
Al-Rashidiyeh	1300	8	9	12	6	6	7	35	3	5
Al-Borj al-Chimali	900	6	5	9	3	4	5	22	2	4
Wavell	500	–	3	3	1	3	4	7	–	–
Total	11698	44	75	88	28	60	75	307	28	37

Source: Lebanese Army Intelligence Report.

Following the resignation of the Solh cabinet, Frangiyeh designated Sa'eb Salam to form the new cabinet. Relations between the two men had improved since Salam's resignation in 1973. Salam's attempt to form a cabinet failed. Apart from the problem of reconciling the conflicting demands of the various leaders and political parties over the distribution of cabinet portfolios, Salam objected to Frangiyeh's insistence on having his son Tony join the cabinet.⁴⁶ But there were other reasons for Salam's reluctance to form the cabinet. According to Raymond Eddé, whom Salam consulted on the formation of the cabinet, Salam was reluctant to assume the premiership for 'he had information that the country was about to witness dangerous events'.⁴⁷ Moreover, there was another undeclared reason and probably the most important one: Syria's opposition to Salam's premiership.⁴⁸ Syria's message was conveyed to Frangiyeh following the latter's designation of Salam to form the cabinet.

The political challenge that any premier faced by the end of 1974 was Jumblatt's rising influence in Sunni politics.⁴⁹ The two leading candidates for the premiership were Rashid al-Solh and 'Abdallah al-Yafi. Jumblatt's influence was put to the test when he succeeded in bringing his protégé Rashid al-Solh to the premiership. A second-rank Sunni politician from Beirut, Solh formed an eighteen-member cabinet on 31 October 1974. Three weeks later, the cabinet gained the Parliament's vote of confidence. The balancing political act within cabinet was the equal representation of Jumblatt, Chamoun and Gemayel, each by two ministers.

The year 1974 ended with an interesting development. That was the outcome of a by-election held in the southern district of Nabatiyyeh to fill the Shia seat vacated by the death of the district's representative. Candidate Rafiq Shahin, who had the backing of Musa al-Sadr, defeated the candidate backed by Speaker Kamel al-Ass'ad by a wide margin.⁵⁰ Shahin's victory against the Ass'ad candidate as well as against two Leftist candidates, supported by the Lebanese Communist Party and by the pro-Iraqi Ba'th Party, was a clear indication of the rising influence of Sadr in Shia communal politics.

This political victory, made possible by a free electoral process, signalled the decline of the traditional pattern of southern Shia politics that had been

dominated by the Ass'ad family ever since the modern Lebanese state was formed in 1920. The revealing aspect of this election, insofar as it took place only four months prior to the outbreak of war in April 1975, was that it showed that change was possible even in one of the most 'feudal' types of communal dominance in Lebanon. It also showed that the votes of ordinary people, and not violence, could break the hold of a deeply-rooted communal *za'ama*.⁵¹

Notes

- 1 Ajami, *The Arab Predicament*..., pp. 5–6.
- 2 See Henry Kissinger's revealing account of the 1973 war and its aftermath, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982): 450–666, 747–853, 935–78, 1032–110. See also Quandt, *Decade of Decisions*..., pp. 165–252; Edward R. F. Sheehan, *The Arabs, Israelis and Kissinger, A Secret History of American Diplomacy in the Middle East* (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1976): 30–200.
- 3 Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 1032–110.
- 4 Published in *Al-Nahar* on four consecutive days, 11, 12, 13, 14 December 1973.
- 5 Ibid., 11 December 1973.
- 6 Ibid., 14 December 1973.
- 7 Ibid., 12 December 1973.
- 8 Ibid., similar views were expressed by another Palestinian intellectual Nabil Sha'ath, 'A1 Thawra al-Filastiniyya wa-al-Taswiyya al-Siyasiyya', *Shu'un Filastiniyya* 23 (July 1973): 4–11. See also Shafiq al-Hout, 'Lildawla al-Filastiniyya', *Shu'nn Filastiniyya*, 24 (August 1973): 5–11.
- 9 See Golan, *The Soviet Union*..., pp. 113–42.
- 10 See *al-Nahar*, 4 December 1973.
- 11 See William B. Quandt, 'Kissinger and the Arab-Israeli Disengagement Negotiations', *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 29 (Spring 1975): 33–48.
- 12 Unpublished official proceedings of the meeting dated 17 December 1973.
- 13 Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 788.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 *On the Palestinian debate on National Authority in the occupied territories and other related issues*, see Alain Gresh, *The PLO, The Struggle Within, Towards an Independent Palestinian State* (London: Zed Press, 1985): 111–75.
- 16 See Cobban, *The Palestinian*..., pp. 231–41.
- 17 Fateh leaders condemned hijacking operations and denied involvement in terrorist acts. In 1973–74, the most active Palestinian group in the airplane hijacking was the pro-Libyan (and/or pro-Syrian) Jibril's PFLP-GC. On Arafat's and Abu Iyad's reactions to such operations see *al-Nahar*, 26 November and 18 December 1973.
- 18 See Farid el Khazen, 'Une Place pour le Liban: La Marginalisation de l'Etat dans un Espace Regional Réduit', in Fadia Kiwan (ed.) *Le Liban Aujourd'hui* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1994): 31–53.
- 19 See Arafat's statement quoted in *al-Nahar* from Egyptian newspaper *Rose al-Yusuf*, 8 April 1974. See also *al-Nahar*, 10 March and 18 April 1974.
- 20 See Abu Iyad's statement in *al-Nahary* 6 September 1974.
- 21 The attack on Kiryat Shmona occurred on 11 April 1974; on Ma'alot, 13 May; on Nahariya, 25 June. After the Ma'alot attack, Israel launched intensive air raids causing the deaths of 40 people and the injury of more than 120. See *al-Nahary* 16–17 May 1974.
- 22 See Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 1076–82.
- 23 *Al-Nahar*, 17 May 1974.
- 24 Ibid., 29 June 1974.

- 25 Ibid., 28 July 1974.
- 26 Ibid., 1 August 1974.
- 27 Interview with a former high-ranking Lebanese security officer, 10 February 1997.
- 28 See Asad's speech in Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon...*, pp. 201–36.
- 29 Interview with Lucien Dahdah, 7 February 1997.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Khalidi, *Conflict...*, p. 169.
- 32 *Al-Nahar*, 22 August 1974. A special committee was formed by the PLO to study ways to fortify the camps. It was headed by Zuheir Mohsin (Sa'iqa) and included Walid Qamhawi and Faruq Qaddumi (Fateh) and Muhammad al-Sha'ir (Palestinian officer in the Syrian army).
- 33 Ibid. By then, 12 million Lebanese pounds were already granted to the PLO.
- 34 The Lebanese delegation to New York included: former presidents Chamoun and Helou, former prime ministers Salam, Karame and Yafi and former speaker Hamadeh.
- 35 *Al-Nahar*, 23 September 1974.
- 36 Ibid., 23 October 1974
- 37 Ibid., 1 November 1974.
- 38 Ibid, 22 August 1974.
- 39 Ibid, 27 and 29 August 1974.
- 40 Interview with Karim Pakradouni, June 6, 1996. Also interview with Michel Samaha, November 8, 1997.
- 41 Frank Stoakes, 'The Supervigilantes: The Lebanese Kataeb Party as Builder, Surrogate and Defender of the State', *Middle Eastern Studies* 11 (October 1975): 231.
- 42 Interview with a former high-ranking Lebanese security official, 10 February 1997.
- 43 Interview with Karim Pakradouni, 6 June 1996.
- 44 Interview with a former high-ranking Lebanese army officer, 25 March 1997.
- 45 See Gorla, *Sovereignty...*, p. 173 (fn. 20).
- 46 Interview with Malik Salam, 5 September 1996.
- 47 al-Hajj, *Min Makhzun al-Zakira*, pp. 128–9.
- 48 This information was given to the author by the person who informed Frangiyeh of Syria's opposition to Salam's premiership. The person, who was a high-ranking Lebanese security official, met with a senior Syrian security official in Damascus and was charged to convey the message to Frangiyeh.
- 49 See Karame's comment about Jumblatt's 'fear complex of the Sunni community' in *al-Nahary* 23 October 1974; Gorla, *Sovereignty...*, p. 168.
- 50 See *al-Nahar*, 9 December 1974. Rafiq Shahin received 21,445 votes and his Ass'adbacked opponent Kamal 'Ali Ahmad received 6416. Other candidates, backed by the Lebanese Communist Party and by the pro-Iraqi Ba'th Party, received a small number of votes.
- 51 Two years earlier, in the 1972 parliamentary elections, Kamel al-Ass'ad won the election by a small margin of votes against a candidate supported by the Lebanese Communist Party.

Part VI

The Pre-War Scene

The Internal Scene Prior to the Outbreak of War

In early 1975 the internal scene resembled that of the last two years. The configuration of political forces could be described as follows. First, there was a Maronite-Sunni alliance which grouped Raymond Eddé, Sa'eb Salam and Rashid Karame (*al-tahaluf al-thulathi*). Eddé, the most vocal opponent to Frangiyeh, sought to neutralise the president as well as any candidate he might support for the presidency. For Karame and Salam, the two leading Sunni politicians, Jumblatt and the Left constituted a serious political threat.

While Jumblatt made significant political headway and had supporters within all communities, his major obstacle lay within the Maronite community, whose established leaders could neither be unseated nor seriously challenged for various communal, political reasons. Nonetheless, Jumblatt in 1975 was in a much stronger position than before to shape Lebanese politics.

As for the Left, the system was rigid and provided limited access. But even with the existing system, Leftist parties since the late 1960s were able to expand rapidly within all communities and were becoming increasingly assertive. They were also in a position to broaden representation in parliament. They would have probably been better off with a different electoral law and a non-confessional system. But they too, like other parties, had a political ceiling of influence and popularity just like political parties in any Western democracy, let alone in a heterogeneous society like Lebanon.

Another political current was the Shia community, mobilised by the charismatic cleric Musa al-Sadr. Although the Shia community was underrepresented, the system did not prevent the Shia from seeking a greater share in the political pie. After all, the man who mobilised the Shia was an outsider both to Lebanon and to the Shia community. The challenge that Iranian-born Musa al-Sadr, who came to Lebanon in the late 1950s, faced was neither access to the Chehabist political establishment in the 1960s nor to the political process in the 1970s, but rather access to his own community dominated by a traditional leadership. Sadr's ideas and objectives alarmed Shia leaders and Leftist parties seeking to broaden their power base with the Shia community and to attract increasingly radicalised Shia political and intellectual elites.

Lebanon's most influential politicians did not seem to benefit from an outbreak of violence in 1975, but were prepared to capitalise on it and to draw political advantage from. Established leaders from all groups had, in fact, no reason to resort to war to redress grievances. Free-wheeling Lebanon had no rulers holding the lives of the people hostage to their political caprices and dreams of boundless power. Nor did Lebanon have intelligence and security forces that meddled in politics. In other words, there were no identifiable obstacles either at the level of state or society, which, once removed, Lebanon's problems would be settled to the satisfaction of all parties.

Prior to the outbreak of war in April 1975, no two Lebanese communities were engaged in armed conflict. Nor could it be possible to single out issues of internal dispute, political, social or economic, that would split the country into two rigid camps and drive people to war. Political divisions were confessionally intertwined, while each community had poor and rich of its own. Put differently, in early 1975, a civil war between two (or more) Lebanese groups over strictly domestic issues was not possible. Communal leaders were not in a position to mobilise supporters and drive them to war either to change the system or to maintain the status quo. No leader, party and/or community, had sufficient organisational capabilities and the military and financial resources to engage in armed conflict and to sustain it.

There was also another impediment: Lebanon was not a partitionable country either along territorial or sectarian lines. Unlike countries with remote areas inaccessible to government authorities, Lebanon's remotest

regions are only a few hours away from major cities. No armed revolt could be sustained for a period long enough to make an impact on the party against whom the revolt is directed.

Moreover, many regions in the country are confessionally mixed, particularly in Beirut and its suburbs. In the mid-1970s, Lebanese society had reached the lowest level of confessional political mobilisation since independence. In fact, a significant moderation in sectarian identification was recorded. Many Lebanese, especially among the youth, saw eye to eye on issues concerning the confessional structure of the Lebanese system.¹ Lebanon in the mid-1970s was much less confessional than in the mid-1950s, or at the time of independence three decades earlier. Prior to the 1958 crisis, Lebanon was more divided along confessional lines than prior to the outbreak of war in 1975.

On the eve of the war, a number of unprecedented situations were recorded. First, the largest number of Lebanese from all sectarian groups joined political parties with no dominant sectarian colouring (the Lebanese Communist Party, the Organisation of Communist Action, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party). Second, parties and movement, particularly the highly politicised student movement, labour unions and organisations active in the social domain were the least confessional since independence. It is no exaggeration to say that by 1975 the 'secular mood' in the country had reached its highest level since the state was formed in 1920.

Third, the Kataeb Party, representing the hard-line position in Christian-based Lebanese politics, had reached a peak level in terms of its political identification with Arab causes. In 1958 the Kataeb Party fought pro-Nasserite groups. In the mid-1970s, it pursued a policy of openness to the Arab political mainstream. In 1974, a party delegation led by Pierre Gemayel, visited Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia, in the wake of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. This was not a theatrical move on the part of Gemayel and his Party. Rather, it reflected a growing moderation in the Kataeb's political orientation.² A new generation of party members, influenced by a respected Kataeb Party figure Maurice Gemayel, cousin and brother-in-law of the party chief, advocated openness to Leftist and Arab nationalist political currents.³ This 'Leftist' orientation within the Party became visible in the first half of the 1970s, particularly among party student activists.⁴

The policy of rapprochement between the Kataeb Party and the pro-Syrian Ba'th Party, which began in 1973 and continued until 1977, was in line with this orientation.

As for the Maronite community as a whole, in 1975, contrary to 1958 when Chamoun opted for an anti-Nasser policy, no Maronite leader dissented in his political views from the prevailing Arab mainstream. President Frangiyeh was on good terms with Syrian President Asad. He was also the first Maronite president since Bechara al-Khoury to maintain good relations with more than three key Arab leaders (Sadat, Asad, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia) at once. Chehab, in comparison, had a good working relationship mainly with Nasser. On the eve of the war, the Maronite community reached a peak in its identification with Arabism since 1920. It is no small significance that Raymond Eddé, the son of the most 'anti-Arab' Maronite leader before independence was, in the mid-1970s, one of the most 'pro-Arab' Maronite politicians. In 1976, Eddé was the candidate of Jumblatt and Arafat for the presidency.

In reality, differences within Lebanese society in early 1975 were not conducive to perceiving violence and war as the only instrument to redress grievances. Change through non-violent means was possible in Lebanon. Parties and leaders of all political and ideological persuasions saw in the parliamentary and presidential elections in 1976 a possibility for altering the political balance in their favour. Indeed, elections in Lebanon did promote change, as in the last two parliamentary elections in 1968 and 1972, and in the presidential election in 1970.

Lebanon's Most Divisive 'Domestic' Issue: The PLO Armed Presence The issue that deeply divided the Lebanese into two distinct camps from the late 1960s hinged on the nature and scope of the PLO armed presence. In the mid-1970s the PLO had become a de facto domestic issue in Lebanese politics. On the PLO, opinions were rigid and compromise, unlike in

domestic issues, was not possible. And with the PLO the internal divide had a military dimension. If by 1975 internal Lebanese differences did not reach the breaking point, those existing between Lebanese and Palestinians did.

In 1975, disregard by PLO guerrillas of the law and violation of Lebanese sovereignty continued. So did PLO indifference towards those Lebanese groups who were increasingly alarmed by the conduct of the guerrillas. The roadblocks that the guerrillas established outside the periphery of the camps, their public display of weapons and their contemptuous attitude towards the Lebanese security and military authorities disturbed not only the politician bent on capitalising on this behaviour, but also the average apolitical person.

In 1958, the spark that ignited sectarian animosity was the assassination of two prominent journalists at different time intervals.⁵ In 1975, however, such triggers were no longer sufficient to engulf the country in violent conflict; something more drastic was needed and targets had to be loaded with the kind of symbolism that would arouse sectarian antagonism. That was the 'Ayn al-Rummaneh confrontation (covered later).

It is against this background of polarisation and insecurity that the war began. But before we discuss the war, two central issues have figured in the political debate in pre-war Lebanon: power-sharing and socio-economic problems. To this we turn in the next two chapters to explore these two issues in historical perspective and relate them to the period that preceded the war. The question we ask is to what extent domestic problems, both political and economic, have led since the late 1960s to political conflict, armed confrontations, and ultimately to the war?

Notes

- 1 For an empirical illustration of this point, see the surveys done by Smock and Smock, *The Politics of Pluralism...*, pp. 135–60. Iliya Harik found similar results, 'Voting Participation and Political Integration in Lebanon, 1943–1974', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 16 (January 1980): 27–48.
- 2 See Frank Stoakes, 'The Supervigilantes...', pp. 232–3. For a comprehensive study on the Kataeb Party until 1970, see John P. Entelis, *Pluralism and Party Transformation in Lebanon. Al-Kata'ib, 1936–1970* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974).
- 3 Interview with Michel Samaha, November 8, 1997.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Nassib al-Matni, a Maronite Journalist who sympathised with the opposition and Fouad Haddad (Abu al-Hin), a Kataeb Journalist and editor of the Party's daily, *al-'Amal*. Al-Matni was killed at the beginning of the 1958 crisis, and Haddad was killed after the election of Chehab, towards the end of the crisis.

18

Power-Sharing

From Independence to the War

The power equation, particularly within the executive, has always been a contentious issue in Lebanon. Muslim grievances about power-sharing have marked Lebanese politics ever since the formation of the state in the 1920s.¹ Initially opposed to participation in the political process, leading Muslim politicians, mainly Sunni, have come to accept the new entity and have gradually begun to take part in the political process. Some believed that Arab nationalist political objectives could be achieved in post-1920 Lebanon, others came to accept the newly created facts for lack of better alternatives. After independence in 1943, the National Pact provided the political framework for a new pattern of communal relations. This translated into Muslim demands for an equitable share in the political pie commensurate with their perceived role and influence.

Power-Sharing in Post-Independence Politics During the regime of Bechara al-Khoury, power-sharing within the executive was not a contentious issue. Despite the ups and downs in the Khoury-Solh

partnership, the premiership of established Sunni leaders such as Riad al-Solh and Abdul-Hamid Karame in the 1940s provided an effective counterweight to the president. As Malcolm Kerr noted, 'the Khoury-Riad al-Solh partnership was one between approximate equals in terms of skill and prestige.'² They depended on each other for support both in domestic and regional politics. Divisive issues in the 1940s, originating from regional politics, were contained by the independence leaders. Developments, such as Lebanon's membership in the newly-formed Arab League in 1945, the withdrawal of French troops in 1946, the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, and the ending of a customs union between Lebanon and Syria in 1950, were handled within the framework of consensual politics, as embodied in the National Pact.

The gap in the power equation between the president and the prime minister became more visible in the 1950s during the presidency of Camille Chamoun. There were two reasons for this. The first concerned the widening gap between the president and the new generation of Sunni leaders, Rashid Karame and Sa'eb Salam, as well as with older figures such as Sami al-Solh and 'Abdullah al-Yafi, who lacked the influence and the communal power base of the earlier generation of Sunni leaders. Whereas Bechara al-Khoury, Riad al-Solh and Abdul-Hamid Karame were equals in stature and influence, Camille Chamoun exercised greater influence than, for example, the relatively less established (in the early 1950s) Rashid Karame who had just succeeded his deceased father Abdul-Hamid.

The second reason had to do with the rise of Nasserism in Arab politics. In the 1940s, Riad al-Solh's peers in Arab politics were the nationalist leaders of Syria, with whom Solh had co-operated within the National Bloc Party in the 1920s and 1930s, and Arab leaders such as King 'Abdallah of Jordan and Nuri al-Sa'id of Iraq. In the 1950s, however, Lebanon's Sunni leaders Sami al-Solh, Sa'eb Salam and Rashid Karame had to deal with the towering figure of Nasser. To oppose Nasser, as Sami al-Solh did, was to be disowned by the 'street'; to support him was to be overwhelmed by his power and charisma, as was the case with Salam and Karame.

Clearly, it was difficult not only for Lebanon's Sunni leaders, but even for established Arab leaders to compete with Nasser in Arab nationalist politics, particularly in the 1950s, the heyday of Nasserism in the immediate aftermath of the 1956 Suez War. It is one thing to have a rivalry between the president and the prime minister on domestic politics, but another when rivalries involve Arab nationalist politics associated with Nasser.³

During the Chehab presidency, Lebanese politics differed from the earlier period. Chehab's reformist policies, which addressed Muslim grievances and gave socio-economic issues priority, helped to defuse tension over the issue of powersharing. In Muslim eyes, Chehab's accession to the presidency was a conciliatory gesture. As army commander, Chehab kept the army outside the maze of the 1958 crisis. Equally important were the cordial relations between Nasser and Chehab. This helped to de-politicise communal grievances and kept them detached from Arab power politics and rivalries, notably between Cairo and the Ba'thist regimes of Syria and Iraq.

The power equation during the Chehabist era, including the Helou presidency, was not an issue of political debate. Lebanon's internal politics were marked by fierce rivalry between government and opposition. The Chehabist establishment was faced by a strong and vocal opposition, which included leaders from all sectarian groups. The decisive showdown between government and opposition was the 1968 parliamentary election in which the opposition made political headway.

Prior to the late 1960s, grievances uttered by the Sunni political establishment dealt mainly with the weakness of the office of prime minister vis-à-vis that of the president. In December 1966 the issue emerged following the resignation of Prime Minister 'Abdallah al-Yafi. Although

there was no government crisis, and Rashid Karame formed a new cabinet, power-sharing was an issue of political debate for a few weeks.⁴ Yafi, along with the Beirut-based grouping of Sunni notables and politicians, the National Organisation Party (Hizb al-Hay'a al-Wataniyya), issued a statement on 13 December 1966 calling for constitutional amendment to strengthen the power of the prime minister.⁵ They received backing from Sunni leaders Sa'eb Salam, Takieddin al-Solh, Uthman al-Dana and others.⁶

This provoked reaction by Christian leaders, notably Pierre Gemayel, who criticised the call for constitutional amendment, and Raymond Eddé, who attributed the problem to the manipulative policies of the Chehabist establishment.⁷ Most critical of the National Organisation Party's proposal was Premier Karame. For him, any constitutional amendment would be counter-productive and detrimental to national unity if it lacked support by all the Lebanese parties.⁸ Kamal Jumblatt defended President Helou, who was subjected to criticism, and accused the National Organisation Party of provoking a crisis.⁹ Speaker Sabri Hamadeh's reaction was similar: he saw 'personal reasons' in the affair linked with the loss of government office.¹⁰ Responding to his critics, Yafi claimed that the intention was not to attack Karame, but merely to discuss the issue. He then dropped demands for constitutional amendment and instead proposed to change the electoral law.¹¹ The proposal called for the abolition of representation on a confessional basis and for the adoption of single-member districts.¹² The exchange ended there and none of the issues was pursued.

These developments were indicative of the following. First, grievances about power-sharing, when dissociated from regional power politics, were not conducive to a political crisis. Nor were they conducive to government paralysis. Second, demands for the restructuring of power within the executive by the Sunni establishment were more a function of government-opposition politics than a sectarian issue. The divide was political rather than sectarian. It also had an intra-Sunni dimension, as the National Organisation Party grouped Beiruti politicians and potential rivals to Karame, the Tripoli-based leader, for the premiership. Third, the debate was confined to the political elite from all communities. It did not reach the masses. Nor was the 'street' then mobilised either for domestic reasons or because of regional politics, mainly pan-Arab, as is usually the case. All this

occurred before the 1967 war and prior to the emergence of the PLO factor in Lebanese politics and prior to the radicalisation of mass politics. The political scene in the mid-1960s differed radically a few years later when the issue of powersharing within the executive surfaced again.

Power-Sharing in Non-Crisis Situations According to Michael Hudson, ‘the presidency is the critical institution of Lebanon’s precariously balanced political system. The presidency most clearly mirrors the Lebanese dilemma ... Only the president can provide the dynamism that a rapidly changing country requires ... It is precisely this possible dynamism, however, that makes the president the greatest threat to Lebanon’s pluralistic balance, even though the maintenance of this balance requires the constant help of the president ... Each president lacked the power to govern the country properly and worked incessantly to develop this power.’¹³ This dilemma has characterised the role and power of the presidency in non-crisis situations.

While presidential constitutional power is considerable, in practice, however, this is not the case.¹⁴ ‘Constitutional reality,’ notes Theodor Hanf, was ‘very different’.¹⁵ Any cabinet decision has to be approved by the prime minister and the minister in charge, along with the president. The presidency commanded authority partly because of the president’s six year term and partly because he is not held accountable to parliament, excepting crimes and constitutional violations.

Presidential power was also enhanced as the power of the executive vis-à-vis parliament increased. On occasions, parliament gave cabinets temporary

legislative powers (for a period of up to six months), as was the case with the cabinet of Khalid Chehab in 1952 when Chamoun took office and with the Karame cabinet in 1958 when Chehab took office. In both cases the legislative decrees issued by the two cabinets dealt with reforms of the administration and the judiciary and with planning and economic developments.¹⁶ Emergency powers given to the executive were not used to enhance the power of the president, or to oppose political rivals. The issues at stake were confined to domestic politics, not to issues on which the Lebanese were in disagreement, such as pan-Arab politics in the mid-1950s. 'The Cabinet,' writes Elie Salem, 'is a picture of Lebanese politics in miniature. It is based on balance and compromise, on tradition and on a middle-of-the road approach that is unusual in the contemporary Middle East... its middle-of-the road policy ... especially under President Charles Helou and Premiers Rashid Karami and 'Abdallah al-Yafi, realised extensive reforms in the bureaucracy.'¹⁷

Muslim objections were not over issues of political and administrative reforms, nor were they over patronage politics in which leaders, of all confessional groups, had a share. The issue of power-sharing in non-crisis situations relates mainly to the sectarian distribution of civil service posts and in the armed forces. While in parliament representation was in favour of Christians (54 to 45), in the cabinet it was equal. Initially, the distribution in government bureaucracy was skewed in favour of the Christians, particularly the Maronites, due in part to social factors concerned with the uneven development of Lebanese society.¹⁸ While the Druze community was well-represented in relation to its small size, Sunni representation was less equitable, and the least represented community was the Shia. In 1958, President Chehab introduced the principle of parity in civil service posts. However, this was a partial solution to the problem in spite of increasing Muslim representation. The problem, then, was not that of number of posts and parity, but the allocation of key posts to particular communities.¹⁹

In the armed forces, the officer corps initially had a Christian majority and the command structure was under Maronite control. But since the late 1950s the gap has continued to narrow. As explained by Walid Khalidi, prior to the disintegration of the Lebanese army in early 1976, Muslims had a slight edge over the Christians among the rank and file (53–47 per cent),

but the composition of the officer class was 65:35 per cent in favour of the Christians, even though 18 of the 37 top posts were in Muslim hands. The Christians, however, predominated at the operational, and particularly the battalion commander level (there were 24 battalions in all), in addition to occupying the key posts of Commander of the Armed Forces and Chief of Military Intelligence. The predominance of the Christians at battalion commander level was not altogether the result of a sinister Maronite plot to retain effective control over the army. To some extent, at least, it was due to the logic of the promotion ladder and seniority considerations, because the Muslims, particularly the Sunnis, had boycotted the Lebanese army when it was first organised under the French Mandate.²⁰

The army was viewed by some Muslim leaders as an instrument of power in Maronite hands. The question, however, is how has this instrument of power been used, and for what purpose? The army in Lebanon was never used as an instrument of repression targeting particular groups. Nor was it used for the purpose of military take-overs. Nor did any Maronite army commander seize power by force. As for the army's intelligence unit (the *Deuxième Bureau*), it was not used to promote Maronite communal interests. Nor was it used against Muslim leaders and interests. In pre-war Lebanon, the army was most involved in politics via the *Deuxième Bureau* during the Chehabist era. The target was not any particular community but the opposition, which included leaders from all communities. In fact, the most vocal critics of the army's meddling in politics in the 1960s were Maronite leaders, notably Eddé and Chamoun, who were most targeted by the *Deuxième Bureau*. And when Muslim leaders like Sa'eb Salam and Kamel al-Ass'ad joined ranks with the Christian opposition against the Chehabist-controlled army, they did so not because their respective communities were targeted, but because they opposed the regime.

Presidential attempts to use the army faced effective opposition. Although constitutionally the president was in a position to order the army commander to intervene, politically he could not do so in the absence of internal consensus, and specifically Muslim support. One such attempt was that of Chamoun during the 1958 crisis. Army commander Fouad Chehab refused to commit the army in support of Chamoun and against the will of the opposition. Similarly, in the 1969 crisis, the army was neutralised. And

in the 1973 crisis the army was not only neutralised, but was also criticised and demoralised. Another attempt to use the army was made by Frangiyeh in May 1975. The formation of a military cabinet, headed by a retired Sunni officer, was a last-ditch attempt to impose order as violence engulfed Beirut. The cabinet was 'in office' for two days. It was forced to resign in the face of unprecedented opposition, which brought together Lebanon's major Muslim leaders (discussed later).

Power-Sharing in Crisis Situations: Sharing Inaction

In the seven-month government paralysis in 1969, the issue of power-sharing was not mentioned. The only issue emphasised by both Muslim political and religious leadership, particularly of the Sunni community, was the support for the PLO armed presence. It was also the issue that divided the Lebanese and over which President Helou and Prime Minister Karame were at odds.

In the April–May 1973 crisis the issue of power-sharing overlapped with the internal divide over the PLO, thus adding fuel to the fire. Several factors helped place the issue of power-sharing at centre stage in 1973. First, the personal feud between President Frangiyeh and Prime Minister Salam was greatly politicised as a result of the Israeli raid and the murder of three senior Palestinian leaders. Salam's call for the immediate resignation of army commander Iskandar Ghanem was opposed by the president. Salam responded by resigning. Beneath these positions lay growing mistrust between the two men, aggravated by differences over presidential prerogatives.²¹

Second, Frangiyeh's nomination of Amin al-Hafiz to form a new cabinet in 1973 was interpreted as an act of defiance to the Sunni traditional establishment. A deputy from Tripoli and initially a protégé of Rashid Karame, Hafiz was a newcomer to the politics of the premiership. Opposed

by the Sunni political establishment, Hafiz was forced to resign two months after the formation of the cabinet.

Third, Sunni opposition politics in the mid-1970s acquired unprecedented complexity at a time of high communal polarisation. Sunni politics, specifically those linked to the traditional political elite, were subjected to radicalising influences emanating from internal and external sources. This translated into dual reactive politics. On the one hand, Sunni leaders went on the offensive by seeking to broaden the powers of the prime minister. On the other, they were on the defensive, as Sunni traditional leaders found themselves competing with other leaders and communities who were also seeking a greater share in the political pie, notably the Shia community with a well-articulated platform under the leadership of Musa al-Sadr. This meant another competing platform with that of the Sunni leadership. Although not yet fully politicised in the mid-1970s, the Sunni-Shia divide began to carry political weight, notably from a Sunni standpoint since the late 1960s, following the formation of the Shia Higher Council.²²

Moreover, in the mid-1970s, power-sharing took on a different political content for Leftist parties. Unlike Maronite-Sunni differences over power-sharing within the executive, and contrary to Shia grievances, Leftist parties advocated the abolition of the confessional system. Their agenda went beyond the distribution of political office and power within and between institutions of government. Their high expectations of imminent change were partly a function of their ideological reading of Lebanon's political and social structure.

In sum, the issue of power-sharing, involving particularly the office of the president and that of the prime minister, became part-and-parcel of the political process in 1973. But while Sunni veto power increased vis-à-vis the president, it declined vis-à-vis Jumblatt. While Sunni grievances were articulated in a forceful manner, grievances of other parties were equally heard. This pattern of escalatory communal opposition politics became more visible in 1975 and later in the war years.

The other side of the coin concerns the party which was supposed to relinquish power: the Maronite political establishment. Two positions have traditionally characterised Maronite attitudes to change within the power structure. One rigid position resisted constitutional change that would

weaken the presidency. This position was most represented by the Kataeb Party and by Chamoun's National Liberal Party. The other position was more accommodative and was in tune with the need to adapt to change. It was especially represented by the reformist platform of Chehab and the Maronite intellectual elite associated with Chehab, whose forum was the *Cenacle Libanais*.²³

The complexity of the disputed issues in the 1970s, and the radicalism that swept Lebanese politics, gave rise to another problem: was the Maronite political establishment, whether that of the 'Right', which favoured the status quo, or that of the 'Left', which called for change, in a position to deliver? And what degree of change would have been required to meet a wide spectrum of demands ranging from schemes for political reform, to system change, to support for the PLO?

Increasingly on the defensive and disenchanted with the state of affairs that had prevailed over the issue of the PLO armed presence since the late 1960s, Maronite leaders were both unwilling and unable to relinquish constitutional powers. For them, the preservation of the status quo was viewed as a last line of communal and political defence. It was an option they controlled, or so they believed, as opposed to 'tampering' with the fragile confessional power structure. Clinging to little useful constitutional prerogatives served as a kind of bulwark against increasing PLO power. Such a position also provided psychological security, especially when the Lebanese army was neutralised. For Maronite leaders, the reasoning went as follows: if presidential constitutional power was paralysed when it was most needed, not only for the sake of promoting Maronite interests but also those of the state, what would the situation be if presidential power were even more curtailed in the constitution?²⁴

Maronite resistance to change in the political power structure in the first half of the 1970s was, in a sense, commensurate with Muslim resistance to change in their support for the PLO. Demands for reform by the Sunni leadership and by the Jumblatt-led Left were always linked to Palestinian politics. This hardened the stand of Maronite leaders, whose position on this issue was in tune with that of the Christian 'street'.

A mutually reinforcing cycle for inaction was in place. Internal opposition politics overlapping with Palestinian politics hardened the positions of all

parties. Had there been any possibility of adaptive change, at least to put Maronite leaders to task, it was undermined by the refusal of Muslim leaders and the Left to draw the line between issues of domestic politics and Palestinian politics. The overlap was useful for Muslim leaders, the Left and the PLO; it served to put pressure on the Maronites, though for different reasons. The eventual outcome was deadlock bad for all Lebanese parties, but not for the PLO.

Attempts to curtail Maronite prerogatives (*imtiyazat*) in the first half of the 1970s were forceful at a time when Sunni veto power within the executive reached its highest degree of effectiveness since 1943. Under such circumstances two alternatives are available to the president. One is to resort to a particular action while paying no heed to the position of the prime minister or to public opinion opposed to such action. This was the policy pursued by Chamoun in the 1958 crisis.

The other alternative is a presidential policy of inaction. In practice, this means managing the crisis as much as possible while using available political and military means for purposes of damage control. This was the case in the 1969 and 1973 crises. While Helou in 1969 was not willing to act without support from Karame, Frangiyeh opted for the use of force in 1973, but was deterred for lack of political support by major Sunni leaders who boycotted him and the designated Premier Amin al-Hafiz. Presidential power was, in effect, subjected to a double Sunni veto: one against presidential decision and the other against the president's nominee for the premiership.

Veto politics within the executive on the eve of the war were even more complex. By then there emerged another veto which targeted the Sunni political establishment. It was that of Kamal Jumblatt. In 1974–75, Jumblatt became the de facto inheritor of Sunni veto power. With his own candidate to the premiership, Rashid al-Solh, chosen against the will of the Sunni establishment, Jumblatt became the de facto partner of the president.

Following the outbreak of war, as will be discussed later, the issues of powersharing of the pre-war period were overshadowed by the mounting cycle of violence. Rather than working for a negotiated settlement, the protagonists prepared for another 'round' of fighting. By then, maximalist platforms prevailed. For Christian leaders, the 1943 National Pact was emptied of its initial content and was no longer operational. For Muslim

leaders, they capitalised on each other regarding the restructuring of the political system. This was apparent in the proceedings of the meetings held in Dar al-Fatwa which grouped, in addition to major Muslim political and religious leaders, Arafat and Syrian foreign minister Khaddam. The common platform shared by the conferees was 'the ending of Maronite rule', but they diverged on all other issues.²⁵ Ending Maronite rule in wartime Lebanon, however, would not end the war.

Notes

- 1 See Atiya, 'The Attitude...'. See also Usamah 'Itani, *Muzakarat Bayrouti* (Beirut: Dar al-Kashaf, n.d.).
- 2 Malcolm H. Kerr, 'Political...', p. 204.
- 3 See Farid el Khazen 'The Making and Unmaking of Lebanon's Political Elites From Independence to Taif', *The Beirut Review* (Fall 1993): 55–8.
- 4 See Sharara, *Al-Silm...*, Part II, p. 713.
- 5 Ibid., p. 714.
- 6 Ibid., p. 715.
- 7 Ibid., p. 719.
- 8 Ibid., p. 716.
- 9 Ibid., p. 719.
- 10 Ibid., p. 717.
- 11 Ibid., p. 720.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Hudson, *The Precarious Republic...*, p. 262. See also pp. 262–335.
- 14 Elie Salem, 'Cabinet Politics in Lebanon, *The Middle East Journal*, vol. XXI (Autumn 1967): 488–502. See also Khalid Qabbani, 'Al-Qiyada fi al-Nizam al-Lubnani: al-Rumuz wa al-Dawr wa al-Wifaq', in Antoine Messarra (ed.), *Al-'Ubur Ila al-Dawla. Min al-Mu'anat Ila al-Muwatiniyya* (Beirut: al-Mu'assassa al-Lubnaniyya Lilsilm al-Ahli al-Da'im, 1992): 95–100; Kerr, 'Political...', pp. 203–9.
- 15 Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon...*, p. 91; Qabbani, 'Al-Qiyada...', pp. 103–4.
- 16 Salem, 'Cabinet...', p. 494.
- 17 Ibid., pp. 496–7.
- 18 See Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon...*, pp. 93–7.
- 19 Ibid., pp. 95–6.
- 20 Khalidi, *Conflict...*, p. 67. For a historical overview of the Lebanese army, see R. D. McLaurin, 'Lebanon and Its Army: Past, Present, and Future', in Edward E. Azar, et al., *The Emergence of A New Lebanon. Fantasy or Reality?* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984): 79–114.
- 21 According to Malik Salam, tension began between Salam and Frangiyeh when the latter dismissed cabinet Minister Henri Eddé without referring to Prime Minister Salam. Interview, 5 September 1996.
- 22 See Fares, *Al-Niza'at al-Ta'ifiyya...*, pp. 127–30. See also Sharara, *Al-Silm...*, pp. 584–90.
- 23 The Cénacle Libanais was a Beirut-based 'think tank' founded by Maronite intellectual Michel al-Asmar. The Cénacle was an important forum for political debate. In the 1960s, it was identified with the Chehabist establishment.
- 24 Interview with Karim Pakradouni, 6 June 1996.
- 25 See Khalid, *Al-Muslimun...*, pp. 221–95.

Socio-Economic Factors and the War

Lebanon's socio-economic scene, like its political scene, has been interpreted in various ways, which reflect the multifaceted nature of conflict in the mid-1970s. Our purpose here is not to provide a thorough assessment of Lebanon's economic performance in the period preceding the war, but to focus on the nature and degree of linkage between socio-economic factors and the process of breakdown which culminated in the 1975–76 war.

A number of works have been devoted to the study of the performance of the Lebanese economy in the pre-war period.¹ Only a few studies have dealt in a detailed and systematic way with the relationship between socio-economic factors and the war. Two notable essays, written by Iliya Harik and Samir Makdisi, have addressed the socio-economic dimensions of the war by relating socio-economic data to the nature of conflict in the mid-1970s. The conclusions reached by both authors negate the existence of any direct causal relationship between socio-economic factors and the eruption of war. For Makdisi, 'the economic factor by itself was not a major factor that led to the 1975–76 war in Lebanon, but it was, in the end, a contributing factor in the sense that it provided for the possibility of explosion – though in a limited way – in its various sectarian dimensions. The socio-economic factor was exploited to instigate the war, the causes of which are political both local and regional....'²

Iliya Harik is more assertive about the absence of a direct link between socioeconomic factors and the war. Comparing Lebanon's economic performance before 1975 to that of other countries at various levels of development, Harik argues that not every case of political turmoil is a case

of discord over social and economic conditions. There is something as old as human history, purely political and pertaining to power ... So it is the case of contemporary unrest in Lebanon.'³ After reviewing the economic performance and welfare conditions of Lebanon before 1975, Harik observed: ... that if economic and welfare conditions were a factor in political turmoil, civil war would have occurred in other countries of the region or the Third World. Lebanon enjoyed impressive economic growth rates, secure financial conditions in the international monetary system, a low inflation rate for most of the period, a very low unemployment rate, good services in terms of electricity, telecommunications, water and roads, a high consumption level of food and manufactured goods, a comparatively small number of poor families and advanced educational services. The findings are so striking that one would almost conclude there is no relation between socio-economic conditions and political turmoil, at least in this case.⁴

Other students of Lebanon's socio-economic scene have either relied on outdated data, such as the income distribution levels put out by the IRFED mission in 1959–60, or were ideologically inclined to offer a critical reading of Lebanon's capitalist economic system. For them, Lebanon's capitalism was inherently flawed partly because of its self-generated contradictions, and partly because of its dependency on foreign capital.⁵ This meant that the system was in permanent crisis. Consequently, no positive change could be attributed to Lebanon's economic performance. The only change was that leading to crises.

Another kind of analysis stresses income and regional disparities in Lebanon's economic development. While Lebanon, like many other developing countries, had an uneven development, the question was how to establish a correlation between these disparities and armed conflict in the mid-1970s. Other analysts, using a class-based discourse, have linked conflict to the 'acute social crisis' in rural and urban areas which brought to the fore 'the inherent contradictions in the bourgeoisie', which detains power.⁶

Taken a step further, the social crisis was viewed as a manifestation of the domination of the 'compradore bourgeoisie' over the resources of the state.⁷ Thus, according to Marxist analysts, the state represented the interests of

the capitalist ruling class.⁸ For these observers, the war was a classic class conflict pitting the oppressive bourgeoisie against the oppressed proletariat.⁹ Some even go beyond the classic class conflict analysis to attribute social strife to the overlapping class-sectarian interests of a particular community as opposed to other communities (*al-ta'ifa al-tabaqa*).¹⁰

The Balance Sheet of Lebanon's Economic Performance Other observers of Lebanon's economy are largely in agreement over the overall positive attributes of Lebanon's economic performance until the mid-1970s, particularly in comparison with other developing countries. As the 1974 *Economist* survey on Lebanon put it: 'the country's economy is basically sound and its people enjoy a standard of living higher than that of most countries in the developing world. This is no mean achievement after only 30 years of independence.'¹¹ But they all agree that Lebanon's economic development was inadequate and uneven, and that it involved a social cost.

The questions concerning us when discussing the causal relations between the war and Lebanon's economic performance are the following. First, did the cost of Lebanon's economic performance outweigh its positive attributes? Second, how did the magnitude of the negative effects of economic development compare with those faced by other countries? Third, in the light of this, how can we explain the occurrence of war in Lebanon in the mid-1970s and its absence in countries having economic conditions and inequalities that are more pronounced than those of Lebanon?

Economic Growth and Financial Stability Assessing the period 1950–74, Samir Makdisi notes that: ... the broad model of Lebanon's economic development may be described by a set of four characteristics: Firstly, a relatively high rate of growth, in real terms, in the 1950s, tending to drop somewhat in the 1960s ... , and an impressive quantitative economic expansion accompanied by generally relative financial stability; secondly, on the whole, a successful external economic stance by the national authorities, but, thirdly, the absence of effective public economic participation and direction manifested by the absence of overall economic policy targets and, fourthly a marked inadequacy in the qualitative nature of Lebanon's economic targets, i.e., failure on the part of the authorities to pay sufficient attention to the socio-economic content of economic development.¹²

In quantitative terms, Lebanon experienced a satisfactory growth rate averaging 7 per cent a year from 1950–74.¹³ In relative terms, Lebanon's growth rate was 'above average for the developing countries as a whole'.¹⁴

Twenty-five years of 'accelerating economic growth'¹⁵ marked an important achievement for a country with Lebanon's limited resources. As for economic policy, 'it was aimed at maintaining relative economic stability and providing the private sector with the opportunity of playing the major role in economic expansion.'¹⁶ Lebanon's liberal trade and payment

regimes and its flexible exchange rate helped maintain financial stability and produced balance of payments surpluses.¹⁷

In the pre-war period, particularly since the second half of the 1960s, Lebanon's open economy and the government's cautious fiscal policy 'attracted foreign capital for investment as well as for refuge purposes, and encouraged domestic investment. They fostered the role of Beirut as a banking and commercial centre and stimulated its development as a money market.'¹⁸ The rise in bank deposits doubled the total value of domestic loans between 1971 and 1974.¹⁹

In the first half of the 1970s, the Lebanese pound continued to strengthen. In 1975, the exchange rate reached unprecedented levels, despite massive intervention by the Central Bank to stem the pound's appreciation. The pound's average appreciation vis-à-vis the US dollar rose from 6 per cent in 1972 to 16.9 per cent in 1973.²⁰ This upward trend continued in 1974 and reached an annual average of 8.3 per cent.²¹ In quantitative terms, by the end of December 1972, the exchange rate of the Lebanese pound to one US dollar was 3.00 to 3.02.²² In December 1973, it was 2.66 to 2.56, and in December 1974 it reached 2.29 to 2.35; by March 1975 it was 2.22 to 2.26.²³

The net foreign assets of the banking system were 4.2 billion pounds at the end of 1973 and 5.7 billion at the end of 1974.²⁴ In four years (1969–73) the total assets of the banking system were up by more than 100 per cent.²⁵ In 1973, Lebanese banks extended loans to international firms (e.g. the French car manufacturer Renault) and to foreign governments (Iran, Algeria, India) totalling 292 million pounds.²⁶

The distribution of the Gross Domestic Product showed the predominance of the service sector. Its share from the national income continued to increase in the 1970s. The agricultural sector grew at a high rate of 5 per cent a year between 1950 and 1966.²⁷ Similarly, the industrial sector expanded rapidly. By 1974, industrial output contributed between 20 to 25 per cent of the national product.²⁸ Industrial production was diversified and more complex industrial processes were introduced in the production of machinery, metal, electrical goods and chemicals.²⁹

Exports recorded high levels in the first half of the 1970s. According to André Chaib, they grew from 3.2 per cent a year in real terms in 1950–60 to

16 per cent in the 1960s and 30 per cent between 1970 and 1973.³⁰ Half these exports went to the oil-rich Gulf states.³¹ Industrial exports in particular increased rapidly. According to Roger Owen, Lebanon's merchants 'were able to benefit from their knowledge of local tastes as well as from the fact that there already existed a widespread network of Lebanese at work in the oil-rich states as architects, engineers and contractors who were willing to use Lebanese products. It is interesting to speculate how far this development might have gone if it had not been cut short by the civil war. Certainly the way was open for the country to become a major Middle Eastern industrial – as well as financial – power.'³²

Assessing the economic scene in pre-war Lebanon, Roger Owen writes that: ... although many people continue to think of the 1950s and early 1960s as the golden age of the 'Merchant Republic' when peace and prosperity seemed miraculously combined, it was during the infinitely more troubled political conditions of the early 1970s that the huge expansion in the industrial and service sectors really began. The key external event was certainly the dramatic increase in the revenues of the oil-producing states which began with the first price rises in 1970. This not only provided the Lebanese banks and other financial services with a huge increase in business, but also led to a significant expansion in Arab tourism as well as another large rise in the size of the remittances sent back by Lebanese workers (over 150,000 in number in 1974) flooding into Saudi Arabia and Gulf.³³

Fiscal Policy and Planning Lebanon's fiscal policy between 1970 and 1974 had three main characteristics: budget surplus, low taxes and an increasing share of the budget devoted to development. In 1971, the budget recorded a surplus of 5.6 per cent (55 million pounds), the first since 1966.³⁴ A surplus of 5.9 per cent was also recorded in 1972 (50.7 million pounds).³⁵ It was followed by a slight deficit of 4.5 per cent (46 million pounds) in 1973. But once again in 1974 the budget had a surplus of 51.4 million pounds.³⁶

Taxation in the first half of the 1970s was low in comparison with other developing countries. In 1973 the ratio of taxes to GNP was 11.9 per cent.³⁷

Tax increase, however, was possible without impairing incentives for work or inducing capital flight. But there was strong resistance to any real tax reform. One serious government attempt to reform the tax system was that of the so-called 'Decree No. 1943' announced by Minister of Finance Elias Saba on 15 September 1971. It increased customs duties on 346 imported items in proportions ranging from 10 to 100 per cent. The target was to increase budget revenues from 600 million pounds to 1,000 million pounds in a few years.³⁸ The 'saba bomb', as it came to be known, was most opposed by the Beirut Association of Merchants who called for an open strike. But it was supported by the Association of Industrialists who accused the merchants of seeking to protect their interests at the expense of the Lebanese economy.³⁹ The decree was also opposed by leading politicians, including Rashid Karame and Pierre Gemayel, and was attacked by the press.⁴⁰ Two weeks later it was abrogated.

As for government planning and policy on development, a Six Year Plan (1972–77) was announced on 8 January 1972. It was an elaborate plan, more comprehensive and detailed than the previous Five Year Plan (1965–69) put out under the Helou regime. The Six Year Plan projected an annual growth rate of 7 per cent, at constant prices, and provided for the expenditure of 7,200 million pounds on economic and social development. Growth rates were also specified in various economic sectors.⁴¹

Funds for the plan were to come from improved tax collections, the state budget, readjustment of customs duties and foreign and domestic loans. Its main objective was to develop the health, education, agricultural, industrial, transport, communications and other services sectors of the economy. In the field of agriculture, it was planned to irrigate an additional 148,000 acres of land. Also, a new development bank would be established to finance projects in industry and tourism. In 1971, a National Bank for Development was established specialising in short and long-term loans to the private sector.⁴² The Six Year Plan, however, fell short of specifying the means to attain the desired objectives in creating employment opportunities and reducing income inequality.⁴³

Although the plan was only partially implemented and was dropped with the outbreak of war, it was nonetheless a serious attempt at government planning. For President Frangiyeh, it was the regime's greatest

achievement.⁴⁴ Also, an administrative reform plan was launched by the Salam cabinet – the Ba'abda Conclave for Administrative Reform in October 1972.⁴⁵ It did not, however, materialise into concrete achievements.

Government developmental policy figured prominently in the 1971 budget and was continued in the next few years. To cover the increasing cost of social security, the share of the 1971 budget allocated to health went up by 36 per cent and that of education by 33 per cent.⁴⁶ In 1972 expenditures on development tripled from the 1971 level.⁴⁷ In 1974 expenditures on development increased in both relative and absolute terms.⁴⁸ They reached 264.2 million pounds, up by 54.6 per cent from 1973 levels. Their share in the overall budget was 21.6 per cent.⁴⁹

Inflationary Pressure The first half of the 1970s was marked by increasing inflation. The rise in the price level was an acute problem to which the government gave increasing attention, particularly in 1973 and 1974. Several factors contributed to an acceleration in the price level, but two were of particular importance: the world-wide inflation of the 1970s, which was bound to affect prices in Lebanon's open economy heavily dependent on imports, and The substantial acceleration in the rate of domestic credit expansion which fuelled domestic expenditure'.⁵⁰

Beginning in 1971, a price index was published by the Direction Centrale de la Statistique.⁵¹ In 1971, the inflation rate was 5 per cent.⁵² The Labour Federation demanded an increase in wages and called for a general strike set for May 1971.⁵³ The strike was called off after the government approved a 5 per cent increase in wages for both the private and public sectors.⁵⁴ The minimum wage went up from 166 to 185 pounds.⁵⁵

In 1972 the official inflation rate was 4.93 per cent. Other estimates put the rate at 10 per cent.⁵⁶ The government opted for a policy of price control for gasoline and sugar.⁵⁷ Gasoline prices were kept at their 1955 level, despite the increase in world oil prices from \$2.27 to \$3.35 per barrel in

September 1971. The gasoline subsidy cost the treasury 3 million pounds per month.⁵⁸ Also in 1972 wages went up by 5 per cent and the minimum wage from 185 to 205 pounds.⁵⁹

Moreover, Minister of Health Emile Bitar presented a plan to reduce the price of medicines and to break the monopoly exercised by importers of medicine. The cabinet opposed the plan and Bitar resigned.⁶⁰ In May 1972 the government formed the Bureau National des Medicaments. The bureau imported pharmaceutical products and distributed them to the market.⁶¹

In 1973 the increase in the price level was a major preoccupation for the cabinet of Takieddin al-Solh, formed after the military confrontations between the Lebanese army and the Palestinian guerrillas in April–May 1973. Apart from the material losses and the disruption of economic activity, Syria's closure of its borders with Lebanon as well as its airspace for three months in 1973 was costly. Exports were seriously hampered and transit trade from the Beirut port to Arab markets was severely hit. Losses, incurred as a result of the disturbances, were estimated at 200 million pounds, added to 600 million pounds due to Syria's punitive measures.⁶²

Prices of several commodities rose to unprecedented levels in the summer of 1973, immediately following the cessation of violence. The inflation rate was estimated at 10 per cent.⁶³ The government responded by forming a special commission to discuss ways to curb inflation. In October 1973, the Ministry of the Economy began to set weekly official prices for 126 consumer goods.⁶⁴ The policy of price control was maintained for wheat and sugar.⁶⁵ On 22 August 1973, six days before the scheduled general strike called for by the Labour Federation, the government approved a wage increase by 5 per cent.⁶⁶ Other benefits for families were approved a month later.⁶⁷

In 1974 price levels continued to rise. Inflation was attributed to the increase in oil prices after the 1973 Arab–Israeli war and to the lack of effective price control. The government figure for inflation in 1974 was 11.1 per cent.⁶⁸ Other sources put the inflation rate at 36 per cent,⁶⁹ which was close to the level recorded in other developing countries in 1973 and 1974.⁷⁰ In April 1974, the government approved a wage increase of 10 per cent. This was a compromise rate between the 15 per cent raise demanded by the Labour Federation and the 7 per cent offer made by the employers'

association.⁷¹ Beginning in January 1974, measures were taken to force merchants to abide by the government specified prices for consumer goods. In the process, 130 merchants were accused of various violations.⁷²

Another attempt by the government to keep prices down was a project presented by the minister of the economy Nazih al-Bizri in June 1974. The project was originally recommended by a special commission set up by the government in January 1974.⁷³ Its purpose was to reorganise domestic trade and to reduce price levels. It faced strong opposition from three major employers' associations.⁷⁴ The government did not back down. But the project did not materialise because the cabinet resigned in September 1974. The cabinet's resignation was due to political reasons and was not linked to the proposed project.

The new cabinet of Rashid al-Solh faced similar problems. In February 1975, the government approved a wage increase of 11 per cent, and the minimum wage was up from 275 pounds to 310 pounds.⁷⁵ The stabilisation policy for particular commodities (gasoline, wheat, sugar) was increasingly expensive, as world prices doubled for some commodities and tripled for others.⁷⁶ There was a shortage of sugar and oil in the second half of 1974. The minister of the economy 'Abbas Khalaf devised a new policy of government-controlled distribution of sugar patterned after the Syrian model (issuing *cartes de ravitaillement*).⁷⁷ He also proposed a policy to sell sugar to industrialists at market prices, while keeping prices for consumers unchanged. This dual pricing gave rise to a black market in sugar.⁷⁸ Khalaf's policy backfired and aggravated the problem. By the time these measures were to be implemented the war broke out.

Periodic adjustments in wages did not keep up with the increase in the price level in the first half of the 1970s. Real wages fell short of maintaining the purchasing power of the Lebanese pound after accounting for inflation. Inflationary pressure in the early 1970s was world-wide and Lebanon, like other countries, including the developed countries, was negatively affected, especially by the tripling of oil prices by the end of 1973. Monopolistic practices were another source of inflation,⁷⁹ and government measures were inadequate to deal with them.

Regional and Income Disparities Two other aspects of Lebanon's economic performance have received attention from analysts: regional and income disparities. A popular theme is the rural-urban gap. One elaborate account of the rural crisis in Lebanon was that of Salim Nasr who argued that Western capital 'has profoundly modified the political economy of rural Lebanon'.⁸⁰ This meant that with 'the increasing integration of the Lebanese economy into the world market, manifested in the hegemony of the financial and commercial sectors linked to Western capitalism, the Lebanese rural world has been entering a stage of decomposition and permanent crisis.'⁸¹ The relative share of agriculture has continued to decline until it reached 9 per cent in 1974⁸² Likewise, the share of active working population in agriculture decreased from 48.9 per cent in 1959 to 18.9 per cent in 1970.⁸³

Nasr then described how 'the intensive exploitation by foreign capital and local monopolies led to the increasing pauperisation of the Lebanese peasantry.'⁸⁴ But he indicated that by 'the mid-1960s at least three-quarters of the inhabitants of the rural provinces still owned a parcel of land. Seventy-six per cent of the persons working the land had holdings of less than three hectares and 50 per cent had less than one hectare ... Thus the small peasant sector still had a considerable weight in rural Lebanon.'⁸⁵ As for rural migration to urban areas, Nasr indicated that 'by early 1975, 40 per cent of Lebanon's entire rural population (though without specifying since when) ... have been driven out of their homes and off their land.'⁸⁶ This resulted in 'the decomposition of the rural world and the ruin of thousands of peasants' as they migrated to Beirut and its suburbs or left for the Arab Gulf countries.⁸⁷

This account is intended to underline the social basis of the 1975–76 war. While it is true that forced migration to Beirut increased in the 1970s and was largely induced by Palestinian–Israeli warfare in the south, rural migration to urban areas in Lebanon took place over a long period of time, starting in the mid-nineteenth century. It was accelerated in the 1960s and 70s, but its nature and consequences differed among communities. The

‘difference in the timing of the sects’ migration,’ Fuad Khuri observed, ‘is important in relation to later political developments.’⁸⁸ Unlike Muslim migration, ‘Christian migration went virtually unnoticed, viewed as an economic phenomenon and not a political one.’⁸⁹ For the Christian, Druze and Sunni communities, migration was a gradual process. For the Shia community, it was destabilising both politically and economically, particularly in the 1970s, but the full impact of migration on Shia communal politics was felt more after the 1975–76 war than before.

In reality, the crisis in the agricultural sector was not strictly Lebanese. Agriculture’s share of the GNP has declined in many countries at different levels of development. The suburbs of major cities in many developing countries have been turned into large urban slums, as were the inner cities of developed Western countries. If one were to relate conflict to the capitalist penetration of the rural world and the pauperisation of the peasantry, one could expect widespread armed conflict in many countries.

The 1975–76 war was fought by urban-based militias, particularly in Beirut, in both the eastern and western sectors of the city. The rank and file of these militias was made up of first and second generation rural migrants, as was the case of the Christian militias in East Beirut and its suburbs. Indeed, the majority of the inhabitants of Beirut and its suburbs were rural migrants who moved to the city over several centuries. While it could be said that the depopulation of rural areas heightened social tensions in the first half of the 1970s, it was not a determining factor in the political crises and military confrontations linked to the PLO both before and after the outbreak of war.

Moreover, regional disparities in Lebanon were pronounced. While this can be attributed in part to Lebanon’s uneven historical communal development, the state did not attend to the economic and social needs of the peripheral areas. Whatever attempts were made to develop these areas, particularly during the Chehab regime, they fell short of bridging the development gap between rural and urban areas. There were marked differences in the overall standard of living and in the health and educational services between rural and urban areas.⁹⁰

Another socio-economic objective missing in Lebanon’s economic policy was income redistribution in favour of low income groups. The balance

could have been redressed by modifying the tax system and altering the pattern of expenditures.⁹¹ A greater degree of progressive tax structure coupled with a stricter enforcement of tax collection was needed.⁹² The tax burden fell primarily on middle income groups despite the increase in income tax.⁹³

Lebanon's Disparities in Comparative Perspective

One way to assess Lebanese socio-economic data is to compare it to that of other developing countries, and to consider its effects on conflict. Iliya Harik compared income levels in pre-war Lebanon to those of other countries at different levels of economic development. He also assessed the linkage between income disparities and political stability. Using the 'Gini coefficient' as an index of income distribution (perfect equality is zero, complete inequality is one), Lebanon showed a coefficient of 0.53 in the IRFED survey in 1959.⁹⁴ Lebanon's coefficient was comparable to Mexico in the same period and to France in the 1970s, but was behind Egypt, Greece and India.⁹⁵

Disparities in income can be determined by the distribution shares of national income by each percentage interval of the population. This technique is also indicative of the financial situation of the poorest sector of the population. The IRFED data put 'Lebanon among the group of countries with moderate inequality where the share of the lowest 40 per cent of the population is between 12 and 17 per cent of the national income.'⁹⁶ Likewise, 'comparative data show that the share of the lowest income

groups in Lebanon does not differ much from that of advanced countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark and West Germany (1955) and is better than that of Mexico, Turkey, Ivory Coast and Tunisia.⁹⁷

Moreover, the welfare conditions of the population can be determined by the percentage of the population living below the poverty line. In comparison with the average figures for Africa, Asia and Latin America, the number of poor people in Lebanon in 1969 (with an income less than \$75) is 5 per cent compared with the high percentages for the other developing regions, exceeding 57 per cent in Asia and 43 per cent in Africa.⁹⁸

Another indicator of the welfare level in a country is real per capita consumption. Among a list of fifty-seven industrial and Third World countries, Lebanon ranked twenty-second.⁹⁹ Among African, Asian and Latin American countries only Japan, Israel and South Africa ranked ahead of Lebanon.¹⁰⁰

The well-being of the population is measured by an indicator called the Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI). It combines three indicators in a single composite index (infant mortality, life expectancy at age one, and literacy). Lebanon's welfare conditions in 1974–76 were superior to those of developing countries such as Portugal, Brazil, Turkey, Syria and Iraq.¹⁰¹

Generally, pre-war Lebanon compared favourably with several developing and developed countries. Lebanon's socio-economic performance, to be sure, was not conducive to war. In Harik's words, 'it seems clear that if economic and welfare conditions were a factor in political turmoil, civil war would have occurred in other countries of that region in the Third World.'¹⁰²

The Missing Link

Apart from the few works mentioned previously, common to the socio-economic explanations is a failure to relate the data to the following: (i) The process of breakdown involving political crises and armed confrontations since the late 1960s; (ii) the timing of the war; (iii) the actors involved in the war; (iv) the course of the war in its various phases; (v) the changing issues of dispute between the protagonists, and (vi) the ending of the war in the autumn of 1976. In other words, how have the deficiencies of the Lebanese economy (assuming it had no positive attributes) contributed to political paralysis and military confrontations prior to the war and how they have led to war?

The writing on Lebanon's pre-war economic performance highlighted various problems and the lack of adequate measures by government to deal with them. There was little explanation, however, as to how problems of economic and social nature were conducive to political crises and armed conflict. Here lies the missing link between descriptive accounts of the Lebanese economy, with both its faults and merits, the destabilisation process since the late 1960s and full scale war in 1975. It is telling that an early collective work on the 1975–76 war, which included two essays dealing with the Lebanese economy in the 19th and early 20th centuries and with the period 1920–1970, made no reference to the war or to the period that immediately preceded it.¹⁰³ It is difficult to see, for example, how Lebanon's economic development in the late 19th century relates to the political and armed conflict in the mid-1970s.

A few observations help account for the lack of a direct causal relation between socio-economic factors and the process of breakdown culminating in war. First, the overall performance of the Lebanese economy offers no explanation of the first violent encounter between demonstrators and Lebanese security forces on 23 April 1969. No economic grievances were uttered by the demonstrators, nor by the parties and groups they represented. Nor did economic factors account for the cabinet crisis that followed and the signing of the Cairo Agreement between Lebanon and the PLO seven months later. Nor was there a correlation between regional and income disparities, for example, the PLO's violations of the Cairo

Agreement and the inability of the Lebanese government to make the PLO abide by the agreement.

Second, it is difficult to see how Lebanon's capitalist system, for example, relates to the timing of the war in 1975, as opposed to any other date before or after. The ills associated with Lebanon's socio-economic development since independence in the 1940s did not suddenly emerge in the mid-1970s.¹⁰⁴ In fact, in some areas, Lebanon's economic problems were more pronounced in the 1950s and 1960s than a decade later. Clearly, the bloody confrontation in 'Ayn al-Rummaneh on 13 April 1975, which triggered the war, had no identifiable socio-economic basis.

Third, for the war to be fought along class lines, one should expect the combatants to come from social backgrounds that reflect the class divide. And, for it to be mainly a civil war, one should expect the combatants to be mainly Lebanese. In practice, however, this was not the case. The war was fought between people who shared roughly similar social backgrounds and in popular Christian and Muslim areas (Christian-inhabited 'Ayn al-Rummaneh opposing Muslim-inhabited Shiyah). The majority of those who took up arms and formed the backbone of the militias (Christian and Muslim, Left and Right) came from middle and lower income groups.

Fourth, the issues of dispute, both before and during the war, were mainly political. They included the power structure within the executive, the restructuring of the army, Lebanon's Arabism and the PLO armed presence. If the Right ignored socio-economic issues because its leaders saw that Lebanon's central problem in the mid-1970 was the PLO armed presence, Leftist parties, for their part, did not give socio-economic issues any more attention. Apart from the general Leftist discourse about the bourgeois-dominated state and Lebanon's dependence on world capitalism, little attention was given to economic issues as opposed to politics. It is particularly striking that of the main questions raised in the Lebanese National Movements programme for reform in August 1975, none dealt with socio-economic issues.¹⁰⁵ The only reference to such issues appeared in the introductory section. Only in a few sentences were the negative consequences of capitalism underlined, notably the unemployment problem and the uneven distribution of wealth. As for demands made by groups that emerged during the war, such as al-Murabitun in Beirut and Ahmad al-

Khatib's Army of Arab Lebanon, they hinged on the defence of the Palestinian Resistance and Lebanon's Arabism. Socio-economic issues and grievances hardly figured in their discourse.¹⁰⁶

One notable exception, however, was the Shia-based socio-economic discourse in 1973–75. Led by Musa al-Sadr, the Movement of the Deprived emphasised the problem of uneven regional economic development. While having a social dimension, Sadr's battle was also political. Whatever forceful demands and justified grievances made by Sadr, they were quickly overshadowed by the conflict linked to the PLO.

Finally, the conclusion of the 1975–76 war was no different from its beginning. It was a political and military conflict involving internal and external parties. Settlement was possible only after the military balance tilted in favour of one party, thus weakening the other. This occurred in October 1976 when Syria overran PLO forces. All other issues, socio-economic and otherwise, were of secondary importance in the final phases of the war, particularly following the failure of the February 1976 Constitutional Document.¹⁰⁷ The absence of economic discourse in the war was aptly described by Iliya Harik: In a class conflict with economic interests at stake, 'leftists' or revolutionaries usually take over economic enterprises or land, but in the areas controlled by the National Movement, supposedly leftists, its forces destroyed and looted factories, business firms and farms indiscriminately. No factory or farm was taken over or run by the 'leftists', nor was any land reform proposed or introduced in the area controlled by the National Movement. The most visible and active 'economic' activity among both the Christian militias and the Muslim ones was looting on a massive scale. No social or economic demands for reform were made by the National Movement or the Lebanese Front in the continuous contacts between them during the two-year war. All their dealings were restricted to security matters and changes to be made in the sharing of power.¹⁰⁸

Concluding Observations Beginning in the late 1960s, the major crises that destabilised the country and brought the political process to a standstill were

not linked to socio-economic factors. They were mainly political crises involving violence: the clashes between the Lebanese army and PLO guerrillas and the seven-month cabinet crisis in 1969; the 1973 Israeli raid in Beirut and the subsequent confrontations between the Lebanese army and the guerrillas; and Israeli-Palestinian military operations in the south.

It is true that Lebanon's economic development was uneven and that government authorities gave insufficient attention to rural areas and did little to bring about a more equitable income distribution. Similarly, government measures were inadequate to curb inflation and to stem the tide of migration to urban areas, particularly in the 1970s.

But it is equally true that such problems were manageable and were not unique to Lebanon. Indeed, there was nothing unusual about Lebanon's economic shortcomings. The balance sheet was not always negative. On the contrary, in some sectors Lebanon compared favourably with other developing countries, and even with developed countries. Lebanon's high economic growth rate, budget surplus, insignificant debt and strong currency prior to 1975 were remarkable achievements. So was its expanding export industry and service sector and its functioning free exchange market.

In fact, none of the pre-war economic problems was beyond solution. Neither their nature nor their magnitude was beyond control, as is the case in a number of Third World countries, particularly demographic-related problems. Lebanon's prewar economic performance with its market system and openness provided the capabilities for adjustment.

Put differently, had Lebanon's socio-economic problems not existed, or had they been resolved, could we say that the political crises since 1969 and the war would not have erupted? If it was possible to deal with socio-economic problems, it was not possible to influence the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its consequences. Had Lebanon's rural-urban gap been

less pronounced, crises linked to PLO-Israeli warfare in the south could not have been prevented. Had Lebanon had a command economy run by a socialist regime, and had supposedly, as a result, Lebanon's economic problems been settled, there remained the political and security problems associated with the PLO. A revolutionary movement engaged in war with Israel and seeking to mobilise the refugee population in the camps could not be contained by economic measures, be they socialist or capitalist.

It should not be construed from the above that socio-economic factors had no impact on the political process prior to the war. They certainly did, but they had not reached crisis proportions to the point of leading either to political crises beyond settlement, to armed conflict, or to war. They did aggravate existing economic problems, but they did not lead to a full-fledged war. And should, for the sake of argument, they have led to war, it would have been a different war, not one involving the PLO, Syria and Israel. The most visible impact of socio-economic factors on the political process had to do with the accelerated political polarisation and mobilisation in the first half of the 1970s at a time when Lebanon entered the age of mass politics, and when ideology reached a peak in party-based politics.¹⁰⁹ But political parties were mainly absorbed in ideological disputes and engaged in squabbles over political rather than socio-economic issues.

There remains one instance of confrontation associated with socio-economic factors in 1975: the fishermen protest against the fishing company Proteine and the demonstration in Sidon in March 1975 which led to the death of Ma'ruf Sa'd. Leftist parties viewed these developments as the quintessential struggle between the capitalist-run state and the oppressed proletariat. To what extent is this true, and what are the facts and circumstances that surrounded this event? This is discussed in the next chapter.

Notes

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- 2 Samir A. Makdisi, 'Al-Jawanib al-Iqtisadiyya Lil Azma al-Lubnaniyya', in *al-Azma alLubnaniyya: Usuluha, Tatawuruha, Ab'aduha al-Mukhtalifa* (Cairo: al-Munazama al-'Arabiyya Li al-Tarbiya wa al-Thaqafa wa al-'Ulum, 1978): 392.
- 3 Iliya Harik, 'The Economic and Social Factors in the Lebanese Crisis', in Saad Eddin Ibrahim and Nicholas S. Hopkins (eds), *Arab Society: Social Science Perspectives* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1985): 428.
- 4 Ibid., p. 421.
- 5 See, for example, Petran, *The Struggle...*, pp. 119–41.
- 6 Dubar and Nasr, *Les Classes Sociales...*, p. 332.
- 7 See B. J. Odeh, *Lebanon, Dynamics of Conflict* (London: Zed Books, 1985): 53–87; Muhammad Kishli, *Al-Azma al-Lubnaniyya wa al-Wujud al-Filastini*, (Beirut: Dar Ibn Khaldun, 1975).
- 8 See, for example, Kishli, *Hawla al-Nizam...*, p. 101. See also the account of Lebanon's political and economic development by Michael Johnson, 'Confessionalism and Individualism in Lebanon: 'A Critique of Leonard Binder (ed.), *Politics in Lebanon: Review of Middle East Studies*, (1975): 79–91.
- 9 See Samih Farsoun and Walter Carroll, 'The Civil War...', pp. 12–37. 'Amil, *AlNazariyya...*, pp. 177–275. Particular demarcation lines in some regions were given an economic class-based interpretation. See Aziz al-Azmeh, 'The Progressive Forces', in Roger Owen (ed.) *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon*, (London, Ithaca Press, 1976): 61–2.
- 10 See, for example, 'Amil, *Al-Nazariyya...*, pp. 206–33.
- 11 Michael Wall, *The Economist*, Survey on Lebanon, 26 January 1974. p. 4.
- 12 Samir A. Makdisi, 'An Appraisal of Lebanon's Postwar Economic Development and a look to the Future', *The Middle East Journal* 31 (Summer 1977): 267–8.
- 13 André Emile Chaib, 'The Export Performance of a Small, Open, Developing Country: The Lebanese Experience, 1951–1974', (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1979): 8–9, cited in Roger Owen, 'The Economic History of Lebanon 1943–1974: Its Salient Features', in Halim Barakat (ed.) *Toward A Viable Lebanon* (London: Croom Helm, 1988): 33. See also Makdisi, 'An Appraisal...', pp. 270–1.
- 14 Makdisi, Ibid., p. 271.
- 15 Owen, 'The Economic History...', pp. 33–7.
- 16 Makdisi, 'An Appraisal...', p. 268. See also Makdisi, *Financial Policy...*, pp. 23–5.
- 17 Makdisi, 'An Appraisal...', pp. 269–70.

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- 19 Owen, 'The Economic History...', p. 36.
- 20 Dagher, *L'Etat...*, p. 150.
- 21 Ibid., p. 172.
- 22 Makdisi, 'Financial Policy...', p. 151.
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- 30 André Chaib, 'Analysis of Lebanon's Merchandise Exports, 1951–1974', *The Middle East Journal* 34 (Autumn 1980): 439.
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- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Dagher, *L'Etat...*, p. 111.
- 35 Ibid., pp. 143–4
- 36 Ibid., p. 208.
- 37 Makdisi, 'An Appraisal...', p. 274.
- 38 Dagher, *L'Etat...*, p. 120.
- 39 Ibid., pp. 121–2.
- 40 Ibid., pp. 123–4
- 41 Ibid., pp. 111–14.
- 42 Ibid., p. 116.
- 43 Makdisi, 'An Appraisal...', p. 273.
- 44 Dagher, *L'Etat...*, p. 111.
- 45 Ibid., p. 140.
- 46 Ibid., p. 108.
- 47 Ibid., p. 165.
- 48 Ibid., p. 207.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Makdisi, 'An Appraisal...', pp. 271–2.
- 51 Dagher, *L'Etat...*, p. 105.
- 52 Ibid., p. 106.
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- 58 Ibid., p. 135.
- 59 Ibid., p. 137
- 60 Ibid., p. 136.
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- 63 Ibid., p. 151.
- 64 Ibid., p. 153.
- 65 Ibid., p. 154.
- 66 Ibid., pp. 154–5.
- 67 Ibid., p. 156.
- 68 Ibid., p. 172.
- 69 Ibid., pp. 172–3.
- 70 Ibid., p. 173.
- 71 Ibid., p. 176.
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- 76 Ibid., pp. 180–2.
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- 95 Ibid.
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- 101 Ibid., p. 420.
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- 109 See Chapter 6: The Age of Ideology and Mass Politics, pp. 73–86.

20

The Sidon Disturbances

Fishermen's Protest or a Palestinian Show of Force?

In early January 1975, the south was the scene of massive Israeli raids, which continued for several days. The Israeli attack targeting guerrilla hideouts in several villages, resulted in the dislocation of civilians during a period of harvest for hundreds of tobacco growers.¹ Most hit in these raids was the village of Kfarshuba, where the guerrillas were based. This military operation would have been added to the long list of PLO–Israeli attacks had it not been accompanied by another unfortunate development. Forced out of their homes and angered by the governments indifference to their plight, villagers stormed the municipality building in the nearby town of Marj'ayoun. They were repelled by security forces and, in the process, several people were injured.

This incident was not lost on PLO and Leftist leaders, who dubbed the Kfarshuba raid the 'Quneitra of south Lebanon. It also served as a pretext not only to attack the Lebanese army for failing to defend the south, but also to praise PLO forces for their 'heroic defence of the south against Zionist aggression.² As René Chamussy observed: 'for the first time the social problem [in Lebanon] and the Palestinian problem became inextricably linked.'³

One of the first critics of this state of affairs was Pierre Gemayel. On 24 January he issued a party memorandum in which he invited the Palestinians to unite their ranks and called upon government authorities to enforce the law and regain sovereignty over Lebanese territory.⁴ Nearly a month later, Gemayel issued another party memorandum in which he called for a referendum on the nature and scope of the PLO armed presence. He also questioned whether the south could be adequately defended in light of the inherent dichotomy between the goals and priorities of the guerrillas and those of the Lebanese armed forces.

The Mysterious Shooting As polarisation over the PLO increased, a serious incident occurred in the southern port city of Sidon. On 27 February 1975, a demonstration of local fishermen degenerated into random violence resulting in the killing of several people and the injury of many others. Among those injured was Ma'ruf Sa'd, a local Sunni politician. A few days later, Sa'd died in a Beirut hospital. His funeral turned into the second largest public gathering in support of the PLO that Lebanon has known – the first was the funeral procession of the three Palestinian leaders killed by the Israeli commandos in April 1973.

Sa'd, along with Sidon deputy Nazih al-Bizri and other city leaders, led a demonstration to protest the establishment of a new fishing concern, the Proteine Company, accused of monopolising the fishing industry and thus threatening the livelihood of fishermen. As the demonstrators marched towards the municipality building in the city centre, where the demonstration was supposed to end, dynamite explosives were heard.⁵ A few gunshots were fired. One bullet hit Ma'ruf Sa'd from behind in the

lower part of the back. Another person marching behind Sa'd was also hit in the hand. Demonstrators, who numbered at the time of the shooting fewer than a hundred, had disbanded, as the demonstration was about to end on that rainy day. Sa'd was transported first to a local Sidon hospital and then to the American University Hospital in Beirut where he died eight days later.

Immediately after the shooting armed men took to the streets. Checkpoints manned by PLO guerrillas and local supporters were established in various parts of the city. Nearly two hours after the incident, gunmen fired at a Lebanese army vehicle passing through the city, injuring the driver seriously.⁶ At about the same time, but in another part of town, an army Jeep came under fire, killing the driver and injuring his companion.⁷ Subsequently, gunfire and explosions were heard in various parts of the city causing the death of one civilian and the injury of twelve others.

The city was closed to traffic by Palestinian and Sidon gunmen. The major coastal road linking Beirut to the south was blocked to traffic. Official sources reported that about 125 armed men entered the old quarters of the city.⁸ A local committee was formed to end the strike and to reopen the road on Sunday 2 March 1975. On that day, clashes erupted while Lebanese army troops tried to open the major coastal road upon orders from Rashid al-Solh who was also the minister of the interior. Army troops came under fire. Two soldiers were killed and several others were injured.

Clashes between army troops and Palestinian guerrillas and their supporters spread to various parts of the city.⁹ One army officer and five soldiers were killed and ten were injured, while nine civilians suffered casualties.¹⁰ The next day on 4 March, an army vehicle transporting unarmed soldiers returning to the barracks in the south was ambushed. One soldier was killed and 29 others were injured.¹¹ The attack took place one day after army troops withdrew from the city.

In another development, a bomb exploded in the offices of the Proteine Company in Beirut, resulting in the injury of five people and destroying the company's offices.¹² The explosion was claimed by a shadowy group called the Lebanese Socialist Revolutionary Movement.¹³

No sooner had the army withdrawn from the city than it was at the centre of political controversy. Attempting to evade responsibility for the

worsening security situation, Solh gave the muhafiz (governor) of the south Henri Lahoud a twenty-day leave (and later appointed an acting governor), and transferred Colonel Abdul-Ghani Hamad, the internal security commander in the south. A few days later, the army commander in the south, General Ahmad Zakka, and Captain Ibrahim 'Abbas were transferred. Lahoud was quick to reply to Solh's move by stating that he was executing the orders given by the prime minister.¹⁴

The Lebanese army was a meaty target for all parties. Leftist parties were willing to capitalise on the event. Only hours after Sa'd was shot, and prior to any official investigation and before the release of any statement from government authorities, Leftist parties issued a statement in which they accused the army of being behind the shooting of Sa'd.¹⁵ A group composed of Sidon leaders close to the PLO and the Left was formed to deal with the crisis. Known as 'the group of 26', it issued a strongly-worded statement which opposed the army's 'invasion of the city and called for its immediate withdrawal.'¹⁶

Most revealing in the next few days after the incident was Jumblatt's handling of the crisis. Contrary to Jumblatt's usual maximalism in crisis situations, this time he adopted a conciliatory position calling on Leftist parties to refrain from capitalising on the events. Initially Jumblatt accused 'radical Leftist parties' of being behind the shooting of Sa'd. He later stated that the army opened fire in self-defence.¹⁷ Jumblatt's cautious attitude angered Leftist leaders, notably George Hawi and Mohsin Ibrahim, who sought to capitalise on the crisis.¹⁸ On 1 March, a massive demonstration called for by Leftist parties took place in Beirut to protest the government handling of the Sidon disturbances. While supportive of the move, Jumblatt did not take part in the demonstration. Similar demonstrations were held in Tripoli and Tyre.

Whether Sa'd's shooting was accidental or whether it was the deed of *agents provocateurs* is an open question. According to one source, Sa'd was shot in the back from a short distance by a special shotgun.¹⁹ Other sources stated that the bullet entered from left to right and was of small calibre. As for the distance of the shooting, it could not be determined with certainty.²⁰ Photographs taken on the scene showed that army soldiers pointed their guns in the air and not at the demonstrators.²¹ Yet another source claimed

that the bullet came from M-16 rifles which were used by the Lebanese army.²² According to this source, an M-16 rifle could have been used by a gunman to implicate the army in the shooting.²³ One other source claims that the man who did the shooting, an army soldier working for a particular group, was later liquidated.²⁴

While the circumstances of the shooting could not be established, what could be determined was that the turn of events had little to do with the initial purpose of the affair: to secure the fishermen's rights. A few questions come to mind. Why, in the first place, did this unauthorised demonstration take place? Was it meant to defy the government and provoke a political crisis? Or was it simply aimed at championing the cause of helpless fishermen?

Fishermen's Agreement with Proteine To be sure, the fishermen had cause for concern when a company with large resources was about to dominate the fishing industry in the country. Were it not for the bloody outcome of the event, and later the death of Ma'ruf Sa'd, the fishermen's demonstration would have been no different from other demonstrations associated with similar concerns, which Lebanon had witnessed for some time. Compared with other problems involving disputes over the rights of workers, teachers and farmers, the fishermen's problem was more manageable. It should have been the least explosive issue since it was the easiest to resolve on terms acceptable to the parties concerned. This is because the total number of fishermen in Lebanon was about 3,000, with Sidon having 240

(and ranking second before last),²⁵ and because the controversy emerged before the Proteine Company had begun to operate. Therefore, there was still room to redress the fishermen's grievances without being hindered by the company's operating structures.

The Proteine Company was authorised by a presidential decree (No. 2456) on 17 December 1971, by the cabinet of Sa'eb Salam.²⁶ It was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Economy (the minister then was Sa'eb Jaroudi). Its three founders were Murad Baroudy, Edouard Karam and 'Adnan Hourani. It had a duration of ninety-nine years and was to raise a capital of 30 million Lebanese pounds. According to the decree, the company would 'fish in the Lebanese waters and the high sea with fishing vessels and modern equipment,' and it would 'abstain from fishing in the water where the Lebanese fishermen are operating, i.e. said Company will fish at a distance beyond two kilometres from the seashore, thus to avoid competition with Lebanese fishermen.'²⁷ Proteine also established contacts with a Yugoslav company based in Zaghreb. The government-run Yugoslav company (Ingra of Zaghreb), which specialised in such activities, would offer technical assistance for the operations of Proteine.²⁸ It would also provide 50 million US dollars for the financing of the project over ten years with a two-year period of grace.

It was in the interest of both Proteine and its Yugoslav partner to help redress the fishermen's grievances by making whatever concessions were needed to begin operating. To pursue this objective officials of the two companies agreed to talk directly to the fishermen. A few months prior to the demonstration company officials began to negotiate with representatives of Lebanon's four fishermen syndicates (Sidon, Tyre, Beirut and Tripoli).²⁹

Over a period of three months, five meetings were held between the heads of the three syndicates of Sidon, Tyre and Tripoli and Proteine officials at the residence of former president Chamoun in Sa'diyat.³⁰ Chamoun, who was the chairman of the Board of Proteine, attended the meetings. In two of them two representatives of the Yugoslav company, including its Beirut

representative Radan Stambuk, were present to discuss the matter with the heads of the syndicates.³¹ The Yugoslav representatives were sensitive to the fishermen's demands, all the more so because they came from a communist country.³² They offered the syndicates modern fishing equipment and confirmed the company's willingness to employ the fishermen, as stated in the decree that licensed the company. In fact, Proteine stood to benefit from the services of the fishermen needed especially for the company's canning industry.³³ The decree also specified that 'the company will buy from the Lebanese fishermen all their fresh catch or whatsoever quantity, as long as it exercises its said activities, for such prices as it may be fixed by the Ministry of National Economy, so that the benefits and interests that they should have before the establishment of this corporation become respected.'³⁴

These meetings resulted in the signing of an agreement between the two sides.³⁵ This meant that there was no reason for the fishermen to resort to violence to settle the problem, since talks with company officials were positive. As for the largest Beirut syndicate, which included approximately 1,400 members (about 40 per cent of the total), it had no conflict with the company. An earlier agreement was reached between the head of the Beirut syndicate Antoine Hamawi and the company by which Proteine would purchase part of the fishermen's produce.³⁶ And in a gesture of goodwill after the signing of the agreement, the company gave a luncheon to which the heads of the four syndicates were invited. Also present were company officials, Chamoun and the ministers of labour and agriculture.³⁷

The Sa'diyat agreement was disclosed at a press conference held by Chamoun a few days after the shooting.³⁸ Chamoun explained that fishing would take place two kilometres beyond the coastline and deep into the sea and added that the company would assist fishermen by providing modern fishing equipment at low prices and would improve fishing port facilities. Fishermen could also be shareholders and the company was willing to employ them. In addition, Proteine would give each syndicate an annual subsidy of 70,000 Lebanese pounds. This amount could increase when the company started to make a profit.³⁹ He then mentioned that shareholders were mainly Lebanese,⁴⁰ and that the company received technical assistance from a Yugoslav engineering company.

A company operating with a capital of 30 million Lebanese pounds and having access to a 50 million US dollars credit was in a position to absorb a few hundred fishermen and to contain their grievances. In reality, there was little justification for escalatory moves on the part of the fishermen. Company officials dealt with their demands with flexibility not only because they wanted to settle the problem but also because it was a manageable problem. Meeting the fishermen's demands would not in any way endanger the company's economic survival or cripple its operations.⁴¹ But there was another reason which gave this affair significance and a particular political colouring. That was the presence of Camille Chamoun as chairman of the board of the company.

For those seeking to capitalise on the issue, Chamoun's association with a capitalist enterprise affecting the livelihood of poor fishermen was an irresistible target. Short of a large working class in Lebanon and a bourgeoisie oppressing the proletariat the fishermen problem was a second best alternative. It could be easily manipulated to highlight the 'capitalist conspiracy' at the hands of one of Lebanon's quintessential 'right wing' politicians like Chamoun.⁴² And short of Western defence pacts and Cold War politics, as was the case in the mid-1950s, when Chamoun sided with the 'imperialist' West, the Proteine affair was an updated version of a social 'Baghdad Pact' of the 1970s. Leftist leaders and ideologies could not have had a better political scenario and a more convenient cause.

As the controversy over the Proteine Company intensified, Sa'd, who had always defended the rights of the fishermen, sought to prevent attempts to capitalise on the situation. Indeed, Sa'd played a constructive role in helping narrow differences between the company and the fishermen.⁴³ More important, talks were underway between Sa'd and company officials through third parties to have Sa'd become a member of the board of Proteine.⁴⁴ Sa'd's participation in the demonstration was viewed by company officials as a guarantee against attempts to exploit the issue for political purposes.⁴⁵ In this way, Sa'd's assassination was intended to provoke a crisis. The timing of the assassination acquires additional significance when placed in the broader perspective of the war that was due to erupt a few weeks later in April 1975.

At first, Jumblatt was taken by surprise by the turmoil, as mentioned earlier. But after he was criticised by Leftist leaders, he qualified his statement and claimed that the shooting was provoked by 'third parties' which sought to create turmoil.⁴⁶ Having to reconcile contradictory interests as the leader of the Left and the 'godfather' of the Solh cabinet, Jumblatt found himself in an embarrassing situation. He could not openly criticise his Leftist allies for capitalising on the incident, nor could he dissociate himself from the social dimension of the issue and look as if he was pleading the case of a company headed by Chamoun, his long-time political adversary. As the crisis intensified, Jumblatt refrained from attacking Chamoun. It was believed that an electoral alliance between the two leaders was in the making for the upcoming 1976 parliamentary elections. This is what Sa'eb Salam termed 'a secret alliance' between Chamoun and Jumblatt.⁴⁷

Jumblatt was careful not to place the blame on Prime Minister Solh who, in his capacity as minister of the interior, was responsible for internal security, and thus for the handling of the Sidon events. In February 1975, Jumblatt went to great length to keep Solh and his cabinet afloat since he had no better alternative. To shield Solh from the barrage of accusations, particularly those coming from Sunni leaders,⁴⁸ and to cover up for the conflicting orders that Solh had given to the army – as confirmed by Solh's contradictory statements on the disturbances⁴⁹ – a scapegoat had to be found and somebody had to be singled out for blame.

Moreover, Jumblatt was facing another problem: that of the radicalised Left. Though at odds with the Sunni traditional establishment, Leftist attempts to capitalise on the crisis overlapped with Sunni opposition politics. Having a political stake in the Solh cabinet, Jumblatt sought to contain the crisis. Leftist politicians, by contrast, believed that radicalisation would help undermine Lebanon's 'reactionary' confessional system. In the process, where Jumblatt lost politically, that is in cabinet politics, the Left gained. The latter, unlike Jumblatt, had little to lose from the crisis.

The Jumblatt–Sunni Feud

The novel aspect of the Sidon events, in so far as its internal confessional

dimension was concerned, was not Maronite-Sunni relations, but Sunni-Jumblatt politics. A Sunni 'summit' meeting, which grouped six former prime ministers (the last time such a gathering took place was in 1967 to elect Mufti Hassan Khalid) and other potential candidates for the premiership, underlined Sunni opposition not only to Maronite presidential prerogatives but also to Jumblatt, whose influence in Sunni politics was on the rise.

The Jumblatt-Sunni rivalry was greatly threatening to the traditional Sunni leadership. This was another source of concern for those Sunni leaders whose constituencies were highly influenced by the ebbs and flows of the mix of pan-Arab and Leftist politics. Jumblatt, the master 'chemist' of Lebanese politics, provided the right mix that could appeal to Sunni-based populism. By giving his Leftist platform a pan-Arab flavour, he provided the sweetest political pill that the Sunni 'street' could swallow. For the Sunni leadership, the situation was viewed as an exclusive Sunni affair. Sidon is a city with a Sunni majority, the third largest after Beirut and Tripoli, and its opposition posture and demands were Sunni-based. In such an 'internal' matter, Jumblatt was regarded as an intruder seeking to break Sunni unity and defy communal political consensus, then identified with opposition to Premier Solh.

The highly polarised Sunni-Jumblatt relations were reflected in Jumblatt's reaction to the demand by Sunni leaders for Solh to step down and to their accusation that Solh was mishandling the crisis. In a strongly worded statement,⁵⁰ Jumblatt criticised 'the short-sighted Sunni policy of resorting to resignation every time the country faces a crisis', and refused to make Solh a 'scapegoat' for 'the game of futile Sunni power squabbles'. He then questioned the merit of the 'resignation policy' which amounted to 'changing faces' and 'diluting fundamental issues'.⁵¹ He also deplored the habitual 'double language' of prime ministers whose political discourse in

office has always contradicted their political discourse outside government.⁵² He then went on to say that such theatrical moves would not resolve the crisis. Nor would it be resolved by dismissing the army chief and appointing another, especially when the place for 'debating such issues has become the street'.⁵³

In another statement aimed at Sa'eb Salam, Jumblatt accused the former premier of failing to deal effectively with the Israeli raid on Beirut in April 1973. He also recalled Salam's decision a few years earlier to dissolve the Sidon municipality and dismiss its head, Ma'ruf Sa'd, only 'because Sa'd took part in [an anti-government] demonstration, and accused Salam of being behind the defeat of Sa'd in the 1972 parliamentary elections.⁵⁴ He then went on to explain how he rescued Salam's *za'ama* in the campaign for the presidency of the Makassed a few years earlier, and how Salam monopolised Sunni leadership and sought to deprive Sunni politicians from other regions of the country (in the north, south and the Beqa) of the premiership. Not only that, Jumblatt revealed that Salam put pressure on some Muslim clerics to claim that the Druze are not Muslims.⁵⁵

What more could be said in a supposedly political exchange between politicians over a crisis involving fishermen's rights? The truth of the matter is that behind this stormy exchange lay an ongoing power struggle for leadership and control between Jumblatt and the Sunni political establishment.

The Sunni mood was best reflected in the unvarnished statement made by Najjada Party leader 'Adnan al-Hakim. In response to arguments made to justify Jumblatt's stand, Hakim argued that 'Jumblatt wants to make his dream of leading the Muslims come true. We will not let him do that. He has to understand that he has no place among us ... Neither he nor others can speak for us ... He has to understand that we [nominate] the prime minister and that we decide when he should resign. We insist that Muslims should govern and that their [political] will emanates from 'Manara' (that is, Ras Beirut) and not from 'Mukhtara' (Jumblatt's hometown).' Hakim then praised cabinet minister Malik Salam, the brother of the former premier, for his stand in defence of Muslim rights. These words were spoken in the house of Malik Salam and in the presence of Sunni politicians and political

activists, notably from Beirut, who criticised Jumblatt for supporting Solh.⁵⁶

The Sunni–Jumblatt dimension of the crisis hinged on the issue of power-sharing and Muslim share in the government. As stated by the head of a Beirut-based Sunni grouping, Amin al-'Uraysi, 'the new generation [of Muslims] no longer believes in the demand for participation ... rather it seeks to review the foundations of existing coexistence.'⁵⁷ But whatever participation Sunni politicians had in mind, their share now was claimed by Jumblatt, who saw himself as representing not only the Druze and the Left but also the Sunni community, and particularly the Beiruti 'street'.

The Lebanese Army: A Convenient Target The real casualty in this political mess was neither the government nor any of the country's politicians but the Lebanese Army. If those who were behind the Sidon shooting had intended to paralyse the army and make its military prerogatives an issue of political dispute, they certainly succeeded.

The controversy centred on who gave orders for the army to intervene in Sidon. From the outset, it was clear that the army acted upon orders given by the civilian authorities. But when bloody confrontations occurred, no one was willing to assume responsibility for the turmoil, certainly not Solh who had most probably given his consent for the army to intervene, but then backed down once the situation got out of control.⁵⁸

The situation worsened when, a few days after the shooting, the army was ordered to open the major coastal road linking Sidon to the southern border areas. In the process, it clashed with gunmen stationed in different parts of the city. Solh's decision to remove the army from the city, after having suffered several casualties, and to replace it by Internal Security forces, was in effect a setback for the army and a heavy blow to its morale.

The resignation of Minister Malik Salam in protest of the army's handling of the crisis drove the army into the maze of confessional politics. Despite

attempts by Solh and Jumblatt to dissuade Salam from aggravating the crisis, he remained adamant about his decision to resign.⁵⁹ Salam's resignation would have been a manageable problem were it not for his insistence on placing the blame for the disturbances on army commander Iskandar Ghanem and calling for his dismissal. Salam justified his position on the grounds that Ghanem failed to co-ordinate properly with the civilian authorities, and particularly with Prime Minister Solh.⁶⁰

Nothing could have been more damaging to internal stability in March 1975 than the public demand to dismiss the army commander. And nothing could have been more personally provocative to Frangiyeh, hence politically counterproductive, than to dwell on this sensitive issue. By demanding the dismissal of the army commander, Malik Salam followed in the footsteps of his brother Sa'eb. Two years earlier, following the Israeli commando operation in Beirut, Sa'eb Salam called for the immediate dismissal of the army commander, who was none other than Ghanem. But if Frangiyeh refused to dismiss Ghanem, when the army in 1973 could not have aborted a meticulously-planned and carefully-executed Israeli raid, he was in no mood to dismiss the army chief at a time when the army was defending itself and executing the orders of the civilian authorities. For the president and other cabinet ministers the army had to prevail, all the more so since violence was not directly linked to the PLO guerrillas or to PLO-Israeli warfare. To make matters worse, on 5 March, a large student demonstration was held in the Christian sector of Beirut in support of the army, thus making the 'defence' of the army an issue of populist confessional politics.

In the light of these developments a question comes to mind: why did Malik Salam choose to capitalise on such a controversial issue involving the army and its commander, while threatening to undermine the cabinet coalition? Why did he insist on resigning despite attempts by Jumblatt, with whom he was on good terms,⁶¹ to dissuade him from resorting to such a move? One possible explanation is that Salam was not only registering his personal discontent with the situation, for beneath the surface of Salam's objections lay a desire to score a political victory against the president as a way of stressing Sunni prerogatives within the executive.

Salam's move was aimed at defending the 'dignity' of the office of the premiership, as he explained to Solh in a stormy verbal exchange.⁶² In a way, this was like saying that if the prime minister failed to stand up to Sunni rights, another Sunni cabinet minister (that is, Salam, who was also a political rival of his brother Sa'eb) was willing to do the job. Salam's stand was praised by Sunni leaders, including six former prime ministers who met in Rashid Karame's residence and issued a statement accusing the government for the Sidon events and demanding the resignation of the prime minister.⁶³

Since Solh remained in office, a surrogate debate had to be found to account for the crisis. Demands were made for a new law to restructure the army command structure. Indeed, Jumblatt submitted a proposal for the restructuring of the army command. It was aimed at limiting the power of the army commander and that of the president, as chief commander of the army.

The Sidon events, involving the rights of fishermen and the subsequent death of Ma'ruf Sa'd, were the kinds of issues that established Sunni leaders could not afford to neglect and allow Jumblatt to gain political capital from their final outcome. More important, Sa'd's political career represented the very political threat that traditional Sunni leaders feared.

Sa'd Versus the Guerrillas: The Camp Versus the City
Originally a police officer, Sa'd was later elected to parliament in four consecutive elections from 1957 to 1968. He was the typical local strong man who identified with the causes and currents of populist Sunni politics and earned the support of the common people.⁶⁴ In his youth, Sa'd took part in the Palestine revolt in 1936–39 and in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. He was also active against the French mandate in Lebanon. 'A man from the people', Sa'd was the

quintessential *qabaday* who was able to break the hold of the traditional political leadership, and he emerged as the strong *za'im* of Sidon and the champion of its populist causes. By the early 1960s, his *za'ama* was well established in the city. In 1963, he was elected head of the municipality. This was a time when Sa'd co-operated closely with the Chehabist establishment; he had links with the Deuxième Bureau and was in a position to deliver 'services' to the people. By doing this he contributed in linking Sidon to the 'state', after having been in opposition since the 1958 crisis.⁶⁵

Not unlike Arab politics in its internal and regional dimensions, the turning point in the politics of Sidon was the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The rise of the Palestinian Resistance after 1967 deeply altered the political landscape of the city. Surrounded by two major Palestinian camps ('Ayn al-Helweh and Miyeh-waMiyeh), and traditionally supportive of the Palestinian cause, Sidon local politics quickly overlapped with Palestinian politics both in their inter-Palestinian and Arab-Palestinian dimensions. As early as 1968–69, Fateh and Sa'iqa opened local offices in the city. They began to engage in political activity and succeeded in attracting recruits for the guerrilla organisations.⁶⁶ In 1970, Ma'ruf Sa'd formed an organisation called 'Tanzim al-Qiwa al-Sha'biya fi Sayda'. The 'Tanzim' identified with Nasserism and received support from Cairo.⁶⁷ A year earlier, Sa'd was criticised by Palestinian organisations, notably by Sa'iqa, for failing to support the guerrillas in their confrontation with the Lebanese Army in 1969.⁶⁸

Coexistence between Sa'd and the guerrillas was short-lived. In August 1970, clashes erupted between the 'Tanzim' and the guerrillas (Fateh and Sa'iqa) resulting in the killing of one 'Tanzim' member and the injury of

several others. Sa'd and several of his followers were detained in the 'Ayn al-Helweh camp. The humiliating treatment that Sa'd received at the hands of the guerrillas was an intolerable challenge not only to Sa'd personally but also to the 'dignity of Sidon', as many began to say publicly.⁶⁹ Confrontations ended only after Nasser dispatched an envoy to mediate between the protagonists.⁷⁰

Though in subsequent years, events came to overshadow such local disputes, Sa'd's relations with the guerrillas, from 1970 until his death in 1975, were not smooth. While strongly supportive of the Palestinian cause, Sa'd criticised the defiant conduct of the guerrillas and their attempts to dominate the city. Indeed, Sa'd had reason to fear Palestinian political and military encroachment. It is one thing to support the Palestinian struggle, it is another to see it turn into a struggle for domination and control in local Sidon politics.

More than any other Sidon leader, Sa'd was most vulnerable to the Palestinian organisations who targeted the power base from which Sa'd drew support: the pan-Arab populist groups, particularly in the old city quarters. In the 1970s, Sa'd's direct competitors in local city politics were PLO organisations rather than local politicians. Another threat to Sa'd came from the mounting influence of the PLO supported Left. This weakened Sa'd's hold over the 'street' and tarnished his image as the strong man of the city.

Sa'd suffered another political blow following his defeat in the 1972 parliamentary elections. His long-time rival, Nazih al-Bizri, won by a small margin of a few hundred votes.⁷¹ In this highly contested election, Bizri was backed by then premier Sa'eb Salam. What made Bizri's victory possible was the Palestinian vote, that is, the vote of electors of Palestinian origin, who numbered around 1,000 and who, in previous elections, had voted for Sa'd.⁷²

By 1972, Sa'd's backing and political cover for the PLO was no longer needed, as it had been a few years earlier. By then, the PLO had more access to the city than any other Sidon politician, and resources which surpassed those of Sa'd and all other local parties and politicians combined. From a Palestinian standpoint, supporting Bizri was more rewarding politically; a weaker Bizri in parliament, owing his electoral victory to

Palestinian backing, was more amenable than Sa'd representing Sidon in parliament for a fifth consecutive term.

Another blow to Sa'd's influence was his dismissal in 1973 from his last political stronghold in the city: the municipality which he headed since 1963. This move was aimed at ending the 'remnants' of Chehabism, at least from the standpoint of then Premier Salam. The gradual dismantling of power centres in the city paved the way for unopposed Palestinian control over local Sidon politics. By the mid-1970s, Sa'd was stripped of much of the power he had traditionally exercised for more than a decade. Although he retained some influence on the 'street', he had limited capabilities to translate influence into political power.

Overlapping Layers The irony of the Sidon turmoil was that what began as a domestic social concern ended up becoming a demonstration of Lebanese-Palestinian solidarity. In an attempt to underline the 'Victory of the masses' against the oppression of the Lebanese state', Sa'd's funeral turned into a rally in support of the PLO. Sa'd was declared a 'martyr of the revolution' and his coffin was wrapped in the Palestinian flag. Such actions were loaded with the kind of symbolism that was not lost on any observer of Lebanese politics.

Since many Lebanese supporters of the PLO claimed a share in the events, why then should the PLO be left out and not claim credit for the part it played in the disturbances. In fact, the PLO had a share to claim. Drawn from nearby camps, the guerrillas took part in the demonstration and were involved in the clashes with the Lebanese Army⁷³ with which they had old scores to settle and would want to see it withdraw from the city. While PLO leaders denied involvement in the disturbances, it was with three senior

Palestinian leaders that Premier Solh and Lebanese Army officers conferred to end the crisis and pacify the city.⁷⁴

The consequences of Palestinian involvement in the Sidon events were reflected on the Christian Lebanese scene. For many Christians, the events had less to do with the demands of a few hundred Sidon fishermen than with attempts to paralyse the army and, by extension, to weaken the state. After all, there were hundreds of Christian fishermen in the coastal cities of Batrun, Jbeil and Jounieh, who were equally affected by Proteine, but did not seek a confrontation with the Lebanese authorities to defend their rights. They instead opted for a negotiated settlement with Proteine officials.

It is little surprising that Sa'd's shooting and the ensuing violence that engulfed the city could have been the deed of troublemakers. Indeed, the last thing the Lebanese Army wanted to be implicated in was a confrontation with gunmen on the streets of a city with a dominant sectarian colouring, and in the vicinity of which were two heavily armed Palestinian camps. If the army had failed to force the guerrillas to abide by the Cairo Agreement since 1969, when it was not yet a politically controversial and divisive issue, it was not going to fare better in 1975, when the political and military situation was significantly not favourable to army intervention against the PLO.

If intransigence by some politicians heightened Christian suspicion, Palestinian identification with the causes and symbols of those who sought confrontation with the Lebanese authorities confirmed their worst fears. Questions went as follows:⁷⁵ how did a local politician leading a demonstration of fishermen become a 'martyr of the Palestinian revolution'? How would the 'struggle' in support of fishermen help the PLO in its struggle to liberate Palestine? These were the images that many Lebanese, particularly Christians, were led to see since what began as local political protest ended up becoming a Palestinian show of force.

The Sidon disturbances were indicative of the built-in domino effect of Lebanese politics in the mid-1970s. What began as a manageable dispute involving the rights of fishermen was transformed into a complex political crisis having overlapping layers: a socio-economic issue between rich and poor; an ideological rivalry between Left and Right; a Maronite-Sunni arm twisting over political prerogatives; a Sunni-Jumblatt feud over political

influence; the politicisation of the role of the Lebanese Army leading to its withdrawal from the city; and finally the ending of the crisis after negotiating the army withdrawal and the cessation of hostilities with the PLO.

This rapid twist of events was indicative of the way in which issues of domestic concern were quickly 'Palestinised' by the momentum of PLO politics in Lebanon. If such an abrupt sequence of crises occurred in an incident in which PLO guerrillas were indirectly involved, at least on the surface, what shape would events take in situations in which the guerrillas were directly involved? This brings us to the next major event, regarded as the 'sarajevo' of Lebanon's open-ended wars: the Palestinian-Kataeb shooting in 'Ayn al Rummaneh.

Notes

- 1 *Al-Nahar*, 2, 3 and 12–20 January 1975.
- 2 It is interesting to note how the ‘battle of Kfarshuba’ was ‘Palestinised’, and how suddenly this small southern village joined ‘the popular struggle for Arab nationalism and unity against imperialism and Zionism.’ See Nawaf Abdallah, ‘Fi al-Zikra al-Sanawiyya alUla Lima'rakat Kfarshuba,’ *Shu'un Filastiniyya* 53/54 (January-February 1976): 127–34; Farhan Saleh, ‘Kfarshuba: al-Tarikh, al-Ard, wa al-Insan’, *Shu'un Filastiniyya* 53–54 (1976): 135–9.
- 3 Chamussy, *Chronique...*, p.69.
- 4 *Al-Nahar*, 25 January 1975.
- 5 Ibid. For a thorough compilation of coverage by the Lebanese press of the Sidon events, see Mustapha Dandashli, *Ahdath Sayda 75: Yawmiyyat Wa Watha'iq* (Sayda: al-Markaz alThaqafi Lilbuhuth wa al-Tawthiq, 1985).
- 6 Ibid., p. 30.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid., p. 106.
- 9 Ibid., pp. 106–8.
- 10 Ibid., p. 126–7.
- 11 Ibid., p. 141.
- 12 Ibid., p. 90.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid., pp. 93–4.
- 15 Ibid., pp. 48–9.
- 16 Ibid., p. 140. The group of twenty six was an ad-hoc group composed of Sidon leaders and activists. Many had ties with Leftist parties and were close to Palestinian organisations, notably Fateh.
- 17 Ibid., p. 232.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Antoine Khuwairi, *Hawadith Lubnan 1975*, vol. I (Jounieh: Dar al-Abjadiya, 1976): 5; Lahoud, *Ma'nsat...*, p. 166.
- 20 Dandashli, *Ahdath Sayda...*, pp. 1–80.
- 21 Ibid., p. 232.
- 22 Interview with a former army officer who was familiar with the course of events in Sidon.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Interview with a political activist in Sidon and a former member of Fateh, 12 April 1995.
- 25 In 1973, the total number of fishermen in Lebanon was 2,900. The largest number was in Beirut (1,186), followed by Tripoli (540), Batroun (397), Jounieh (390), Sidon (240), Jbeil (237). See the official government survey in *Recueil des Statistiques Libanaises*, 1974, pp. 130–1. In 1966, the number of fishermen in Sidon was 166. See Nazih Husna, *Sayda wa Mas'lat al-Za'ama al-Siyasiyya: Ma'ruf Sa'd* (Sayda: al Markaz al-Thaqafi Lilta'lim wa alDirasat al-Jami'yya, 1982): 55.

- 26 See text of government authorisation in a booklet issued by Proteine, *Proteine S.A.L., Fishing, Industrialisation and Marketing of Fish Products in Lebanon* (1973): 1–2.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Interview with Murad Baroudy, co-founder and former director of Proteine Company, 31 March 1995.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 *Proteine S.A.L.*, p. 2.
- 35 Interview with Murad Baroudy, 31 March 1995.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 During the luncheon a quarrel took place between the head of the Tripoli syndicate, who was close to Rashid Karame, and Chamoun's bodyguard. Dandashli, *Ahdath Sayda...*, pp. 237–8.
- 38 Dandashli, *Ahdath Sayda...*, pp. 97–100. Confirmed by Murad Baroudy.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Confirmed by Murad Baroudy. The number of shareholders was 120. No shareholder controlled more than 10%. All shareholders were Lebanese.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 See, for example, *Al-Hadaf*, Al-Sulta al-Ta'ifiyya wa al-Ihtikar wara' Ahdath Sayda alDamiya', 8 March 1975, pp. 10–14. See also *Al-Hadaf*, 15 March 1975, pp. 11–16.
- 43 *Al-Nahar*, 1 March 1975.
- 44 Interview with Murad Baroudy, 31 March 1995.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 *Al-Nahar*, 9 February 1975.
- 47 Dandashli, *Ahdath Sayda...*, p. 233.
- 48 Ibid. Khuwairi, *Hawadeth Lubnan...*, pp. 6–7.
- 49 *Al-Nahar*, March 6, 1975. Dandashli, *Ahdath Sayda...*, p. 234.
- 50 Dandashli, *Ahdath Sayda...*, pp. 287–300.
- 51 Ibid., p. 289.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid., p. 300.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Ibid., p. 301.
- 56 Ibid., pp. 398–401.
- 57 Ibid., p. 400.
- 58 According to *al-Nahar*, 2 March 1975, Rashid al-Solh's decisions were inspired by Jumblatt.
- 59 See Lebanese Army communiqué, in *al-Nahar*, 2 February 1975. See also Khuwairi, *Hawadith Lubnan...*, pp. 8–9 (statement by Defence Minister Joseph Skaff).
- 60 *Al-Nahar*, 6 March 1975.
- 61 Interview with Malik Salam, 5 September 1996.

- 62 Dandashli, *Ahdath Sayda...*, p. 401.
- 63 Ibid., p. 329 and pp. 390–4.
- 64 Husna, *Sayda...*, pp. 95–179.
- 65 Ibid., p. 165.
- 66 Ibid., p. 159.
- 67 Ibid., p. 160.
- 68 Ibid., p. 161.
- 69 Interview with two Sidon political activists and longtime residents of the city, 25 April 1995.
- 70 Husna, *Sayda...*, p. 161.
- 71 Ibid., p. 163.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 *Al-Nahar*, 1 March 1975.
- 74 Ibid., March 4, 1975; Dandashli, *Ahdath Sayda...*, p. 125. Palestinian leaders were Abu al-Za'im, Abu Hassan and Abu Jihad.
- 75 *Al-Nahar*, 7 March 1975.

Part VII

Lebanon's Multifaceted War: 1975–1976

The 'Ayn al-Rummaneh Confrontation

The Inevitable Trigger

For observers of the Lebanese-Palestinian scene in 1975, the customary pattern of confrontations between the PLO and the Lebanese Army since 1969, and the cycle of violence involving Israel and the Palestinians, became somewhat predictable. These confrontations gained a certain degree of normality. They became, in a way, obsolete in terms of their impact on Lebanese public opinion, for the initial damage was done early on in 1969.

The last major showdown between the guerrillas and the Lebanese army occurred in April–May 1973. In 1974 repeated Palestinian–Israeli confrontations, which exacerbated Lebanon's socio-economic problems and caused the dislocation of hundreds of people, did not bring down state institutions. Nor did they generate deep sectarian animosity. Although the Sidon disturbances involved issues with sectarian overtones, they were contained. To provoke turmoil, an event of an unprecedented scale which would divide the country along rigid confessional lines was needed. And what could provide more catastrophic results than a violent shoot-out between PLO and Kataeb gunmen with no one knowing who started the shooting and why it took place?

While the 'Ayn al-Rummaneh shooting on 13 April 1975 was not the first direct confrontation between the two groups, it differed from previous

confrontations in that it lacked well-defined reasons and identifiable objectives. Previous clashes were caused by particular acts, such as a quarrel at a guerrilla checkpoint, kidnapping, or some other incident.

It is perhaps desirable (and no doubt much easier) for anyone analysing the war in Lebanon to stay away from 'conspiracy theories'. But one cannot but suspect that what happened in 'Ayn al-Rummaneh was not merely an accidental act of violence. Clearly, those trapped in the rampage were not aware of the quicksand into which they had fallen. The site of the incident was of little importance. The shooting could have taken place in another part of the city and on another occasion, for in the mid-1970s there was no dearth of sites or pretexts for violence.

A bus carrying guerrillas was commonplace in the 1970s. The same bus that passed through 'Ayn al-Rummaneh had, a few hours earlier, transported guerrillas to the Sabra camp area where rallies were held to mark the first anniversary of a raid carried out by a commando unit of the PFLP-GC in the northern Israeli settlement of Kiryat Shmona (the Palestinian village of al-Khalisiyya). Convoys of armed Palestinians coming from various camps passed through residential areas, Christian and Muslim alike, early in the morning; but they did not come under fire. It was a bus that passed through 'Ayn al-Rummaneh at a time when supporters of the Kataeb Party and the National Liberal Party were on full alert, following the killing a few hours earlier of two people by Palestinian gunmen, that ignited the fire.

The bizarre aspect of the event was that a few days earlier, on 2 April, in anticipation of two scheduled celebrations on Sunday 13 April (a Palestinian rally and Pierre Gemayel's attendance at a church ceremony), Lebanese security authorities signed an agreement with four representatives of Palestinian organisations (Fateh was represented by Abu Hassan Salameh) which prevented convoys of armed men passing through 'Ayn al-Rummaneh on 13 April.¹ In a meeting held at the presidential palace on 14 May 1975, which included, in addition to Frangiyeh and Arafat, the Egyptian and Saudi ambassadors, Frangiyeh presented a copy of the minutes of the meeting held between Lebanese and Palestinian officials in which it was agreed that Palestinian armed convoys would not pass through 'Ayn al-Rummaneh.² Arafat denied knowledge of such an agreement.³

Apart from this agreement, there was another equally revealing detail. The drive for a commuter between Sabra camp, where the Palestinian rally was held, and Tal-Za'tar camp in the East Beirut suburb of Dikwaneh, where the bus was heading, did not necessarily have to be through 'Ayn al-Rummaneh. The question is why would the bus driver, who was Lebanese and who must have known the area fairly well, take the route through 'Ayn al-Rummaneh? But more important, why was he not instructed by the Palestinian command to avoid taking the road through 'Ayn al-Rummaneh, as was agreed upon in the meeting held between Palestinian and Lebanese officials?

One answer to the question was provided by the bus driver, Mustapha Hussein, who, along with another passenger (a Lebanese Muslim cleric),⁴ were the only two survivors of the shooting.⁵ According to an official Internal Security report presented to the military prosecutor, the bus driver was instructed by a municipality policeman to take the 'Ayn al-Rummaneh road when the bus reached the intersection of the Ghannum-Maroun Maroun and Ass'ad al-Ass'ad streets.⁶ As the bus passed through the street, where several armed men were present, the shooting started. The identity of the policeman remained unknown. Nor was it known how the policeman surfaced and how he disappeared leaving no trace. The 'mystery' of the policeman could not be explained.

The above covers only one side of the story; the other was no less puzzling. Around 11 a.m. that day, two cars twice attempted to force their way into an area closed off to traffic by the police,⁷ where Pierre Gemayel was attending the consecration ceremony of a new Greek Catholic church.⁸ The first car (a Volkswagen) carrying two Palestinians from the DFLP⁹ was prevented from passing by armed men gathered outside the church. But the driver refused to stop and drove towards the crowd, which gathered at the entrance of the church. At that point, Kataeb armed men shot at the car, hitting the driver in the hand. He was then taken to a Palestinian-run hospital (al-Qods).¹⁰ The next day, the injured man disappeared from the hospital.¹¹

About an hour later, another car (a Fiat) with license plates covered by paper displaying guerrilla slogans, forced its way through an Internal Security checkpoint, established immediately after the earlier shooting.¹²

Armed men in the car began shooting at the people gathered outside the church entrance. This led to the killing of Gemayel's bodyguard, Joseph Abu 'Assi, another Kataeb member (Antoine al-Husseini), and two other persons.¹³

Immediately after the shooting, rumours spread that Gemayel was the target of an assassination attempt by Palestinian gunmen. Local armed men from the Kataeb Party and the National Liberal Party, which had a strong presence in 'Ayn alRummaneh, took to the streets. It was in this highly tense atmosphere and about three hours after the previous shooting (at 2:30 p.m.),¹⁴ that a bus carrying thirty passengers, many of them armed, passed by. By then, members of the Kataeb and National Liberal Parties had established roadblocks. Shooting began from both sides and in less than an hour the carnage was over. Twenty-seven guerrillas were killed and two other passengers, while the driver and seven Kataeb Party members were injured.¹⁵ Among the dead were twenty members of the pro-Iraqi Arab Liberation Front,¹⁶ two from Fateh, two from Sa'iqa, two from Jibril's PFLP-GC, and one from the Nasser Forces.¹⁷ Among the twenty members of the Arab Liberation Front were ten Palestinians, eight Lebanese, one Syrian and one Iraqi.¹⁸ The next day Lebanese Internal Security forces arrested twelve men from the 'Ayn alRummaneh locality, four of whom were armed.¹⁹

For those armed men on full alert, a busload of armed Palestinians forcing its way through a deserted street which only two hours earlier was the scene of shooting was yet another provocation. For them, the guerrillas were back, now in large numbers, to engage in another shoot-out. At that point, confrontation was inevitable; it had the desired effect: to provoke a clash between the two most antagonistic groups in the country.

The provocations and 'coincidences' that took place in a few hours' time in 'Ayn al-Rummaneh suggest a set-up. Rallies and public gatherings at which people displayed arms in celebration of social and political events were common in Lebanon. That these events would generate hostilities in a series of inexplicable developments were 'coincidences' that were out of the ordinary.

In the mid-1970s, Lebanon was a fertile ground for such actions. Several internal and external parties sought to exploit Lebanon's turmoil. In a

statement made in 1974 Fateh intelligence chief Abu Iyad indicated that no fewer than seven intelligence services were active in Lebanon.²⁰ The target for any systematic destabilisation attempt was not only Lebanon but also the PLO.

This violent incident was all the more damaging since PLO guerrillas and the Kataeb shared at least one characteristic: their ability to influence their respective power bases in times of crisis. With a populist and highly irritable following, clashes between the two adversaries triggered a chain reaction which could not be easily contained: the Palestinians influencing Lebanese supporters as well as Arab regimes, and the Kataeb influencing Christian public opinion. Both groups possessed powerful symbolism in the eyes of their respective power bases and possessed organisational networks to mobilise supporters.

The Aftermath of 'Ayn al-Rummaneh: Political War

In a period of weeks, Lebanon was the scene of two events which were given many interpretations and were identified with a variety of causes: a 'social revolution' in Sidon, followed by an attempt to 'liquidate the Palestinian revolution' in 'Ayn al-Rummaneh at the hands of 'isolationist' and 'fascist' forces working for 'American and Zionist imperialism'. That was the reading offered by Palestinian leaders and the Lebanese Left.²¹

Speaking in the name of Leftist parties, Kamal Jumblatt declared political war against the Kataeb Party and called for it to be banned.²² A few days later, the Front for the Support of the Palestinian Resistance – a pro-Fateh umbrella organisation of 23 pan-Arab and Leftist parties and groupings drawn from several Arab countries and headed by Jumblatt – announced its verdict: the political isolation ('*azl*) of the Kataeb Party in the Arab world and its economic and financial boycotting.²³ The Front for the Support of

the Palestinian Resistance was initially the initiative of the Lebanese Communist Party following its third convention in 1973. The purpose of the Front was to provide political support for the PLO. Calls were made by Palestinian groups to draw long term plans to isolate the Kataeb Party politically and economically, both in Lebanon and in the Arab world.²⁴

The decision to isolate the Kataeb Party was made by Kamal Jumblatt upon the recommendation of Leftist leaders, notably Moshin Ibrahim and George Hawi.²⁵ It was believed that this position would keep conflict within a political context. This in turn would prevent military escalation by the PLO.²⁶ Clearly, that was an ill-calculated move, for the decision to isolate the Kataeb was associated with the PLO. Although Gemayel was careful not to jump to hasty conclusions regarding the perpetrators of the incident, he said that similar provocations had been attempted to instigate turmoil, including an aborted attempt to kidnap his elder son Amin, only a few days before the 'Ayn al-Rummaneh shooting.²⁷

The decision to isolate the Kataeb showed that Kamal Jumblatt, Leftist leaders and their Palestinian supporters had little understanding of the scope of opposition to the PLO within Christian public opinion. While Jumblatt was convinced that the call to isolate the Kataeb Party would have little impact on Christian opinion, Leftist leaders were equally convinced that Christian parties would not dare to engage in a military confrontation with the PLO.²⁸ In addition, PLO military commanders suggested a military operation in the Ashrafiyeh Christian quarter, the stronghold of the Kataeb Party in the heart of East Beirut.²⁹ What the Left and the PLO saw as a conspiracy by a politically isolated Kataeb Party was the exact opposite of what many Christians saw as yet another attempt by the PLO and its supporters to provoke turmoil.

Palestinian and Leftist leaders seemed convinced that the Kataeb had little support within the Christian community and that its days were numbered.³⁰ According to Kataeb official Karim Pakradouni, who conferred with Arafat immediately after the decision to isolate the Kataeb Party, Arafat believed that the Kataeb Party represented a minority view within the Christian community. Arafat's advice was to have the Kataeb Party disarm and to moderate its views.³¹ Another Palestinian leader, Zuheir Mohsin, claimed that the Kataeb leadership showed a 'total ignorance of the reality of

Lebanese society and of the horizons of its evolution'.³² In this polarised setting, the decision to isolate the Kataeb Party drew many Christians closer to the Kataeb position. From then onward, the Kataeb Party was increasingly perceived in Christian populist circles as the last line of defence against imminent PLO military take-over.

In the face of mounting maximalism, the Solh cabinet was no longer salvageable. While Jumblatt knew that keeping Solh was a political liability, he was not willing to let the cabinet be pressurised by political adversaries.³³ Instead, he asked his two cabinet supporters, 'Abbas Khalaf and Khalid Jumblatt, to resign and exchanged accusations with Gemayel.³⁴ The elements for a serious political crisis were in place.³⁵

The unexpected development was Solh's accusation against the Kataeb Party of 'provoking the massacre of 'Ayn al-Rummaneh'.³⁶ Solh's statement was made in a formal speech of resignation read before parliament. The speech was written by George Hawi, Mohsin Ibrahim and 'Issam Na'man, and called for a restructuring of the confessional system.³⁷ It earned the applause of only one deputy.³⁸ As he finished his hasty speech, Solh left the podium and ran quickly outside the hall amidst the objections and shouting of many deputies. Kataeb deputy Amin Gemayel hurled himself to the door trying to prevent Solh from leaving before hearing the Kataeb Party reply to his accusations.³⁹ Minister of Defence Joseph Ska'f accused Solh of fomenting sectarian turmoil and of seeking to divide the army.⁴⁰

The prime minister's accusations were made at a time when the government investigation was still in progress, and when Gemayel was willing to cooperate with Solh to defuse the crisis. Indeed, at Solh's request, two Kataeb Party members were handed over to the government authorities with the understanding that Solh would ask the Palestinian leadership to hand over the perpetrators of the morning shooting in 'Ayn al-Rummaneh. According to a Kataeb communiqué issued in response to Solh's statements, the two detained party members were randomly chosen. They were not even present in 'Ayn al-Rummaneh at the time of the shooting.⁴¹ This was done, the party communiqué continued, at the request of Solh, who asked Kataeb cabinet ministers in the presence of other cabinet ministers and several senior security officials and army officers to 'hand in anybody' as a face-saving arrangement to help defuse the crisis.⁴²

In light of this account,⁴³ and in view of Solh's unfounded accusations,⁴⁴ it was clear that Solh deliberately sought to escalate the crisis. But the question is why did Solh want to capitalise on such a sensitive issue? Solh could have resigned, voiced his dismay and recorded his objections without having to resort to accusations that were bound to deepen internal divisions and aggravate the crisis.

Three reasons help explain Solh's behaviour. First, Jumblatt's political manoeuvring. Second, Solh's political vulnerability vis-à-vis the Sunni political establishment, the Palestinians and the Left. Third, the objective of isolating the Kataeb Party.

Following the 'Ayn al-Rummaneh confrontation, the cabinet began to disintegrate. While Solh himself would have probably wanted to remain in office, Jumblatt was unwilling to invest any more political capital in a cabinet which hardly survived the more manageable disturbances in Sidon a few weeks earlier, let alone a crisis in which the Palestinians were directly involved. But Jumblatt did not want to allow the Kataeb Party to force Solh to step down.

Aware of Jumblatt's calculations, Gemayel sought to undercut any negative move on the part of Jumblatt by having the two Kataeb ministers (George Sa'adeh and Louis Abou Charaf) resign.⁴⁵ This move was followed by the resignation of the cabinet ministers of Chamoun's National Liberal Party (Michel Sassine and Mahmoud 'Ammar) and the resignation of Druze leader Majid Arslan. At that point, knowing that Solh could no longer stay in office in the face of Sunni opposition, Jumblatt was willing to let the cabinet fall, but not under pressure from three leading opponents, Gemayel, Chamoun and Arslan. Jumblatt wanted to have the final word on the dissolution of the Solh cabinet, just as he was instrumental in forming it.⁴⁶

The other motive behind Solh's action concerned his political calculations after leaving office. Solh's reference in his speech to two controversial issues in Lebanese politics – the army's role in the Sidon disturbances and the issue of powersharing⁴⁷ – was an attempt to mend fences with all three power centres with which he identified: the Left, the Sunni political establishment and the Palestinians. There was little justification for bringing up these issues in such a confrontational manner. The cabinet crisis had

nothing to do with the issue of power-sharing, nor did the 'Ayn al-Rummaneh shooting involve the Lebanese army.

Solh seized the opportunity of his resignation to improve his standing within the Sunni 'street' and the Left. Only a month earlier, during the Sidon events, Solh came under strong criticism from the Sunni political establishment as well as from the Left. While support for Arab causes was a derivative of Sunni politics in Lebanon, Solh, unlike other prime ministers, had a political debt to pay to his Leftist supporters, without whom he could not have been in office.

The third factor explain Solh's maximalism concerned the Leftist-Palestinian agenda to isolate the Kataeb Party. By singling out the Kataeb Party for blame, Solh sought to discredit the Kataeb and put the Party leadership on the defensive. On that issue, Solh was following Jumblatt's instructions.⁴⁸

In short, the Kataeb Party was a convenient target for all parties, both Lebanese and Palestinian. Declaring political war against the Kataeb served multiple objectives. For Solh, it was the best scenario to leave office while preserving political credentials. For Jumblatt, who was no longer willing to salvage the cabinet, it served future political calculations. For Leftist parties, it helped hasten the collapse of Lebanon's deficient political system. And for the Palestinians, it neutralised a political opponent and a vocal critic.

Notes

- 1 See Khuwairi, *Hawadith Lubnan...*, pp. 76–7. See also an unpublished official report submitted to the military prosecutor, prepared by Captain Abdul-Karim Ghandour who was the acting commander of Internal Security Forces in Ba'abda, 13 April 1975.
- 2 Khuwairi, *Ibid.*
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 The cleric's name is Shaykh Muhammad Ali Mohsin.
- 5 Internal Security Report, 13 April 1975.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 See *Al-Nahar*, 14 April 1975; Khuwairi, *Hawadith Lubnan...*, p. 14; Internal Security Report, 13 April 1975.
- 8 *Al-Nahar*, 14 April 1975 and 16 May 1975.
- 9 Interview with a former senior member of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine who did not want to be identified, 16 July 1995. The car owner's name is Muntasir Ahmad Muntasir and the licence plate number is 49914 1. See *Al-Jamhour*, 17 April 1975. According to the Internal Security Report, 13 April 1975, one man was in the car.
- 10 Khuwairi, *Hawadith Lubnan...*, p. 14.
- 11 *Ibid.*; an investigator from the Arab Liberation Front (Amin Yassin) met with the injured driver in the al-Qods hospital. The next day the driver disappeared from the hospital. See also the Internal Security Report, 13 April 1975.
- 12 Internal Security Report, 13 April 1975.
- 13 *Al-Nahar*, 14 April 1975.
- 14 Internal Security Report, 13 April 1975.
- 15 *Ibid.* Another source put the number of killed at 30. *Ila al-Amam*, 25 April 1975.
- 16 *Al-Tha'ir al-'Arabi*, 1 May 1975, pp. 26–7. Confirmed by a source close to the Arab Liberation Front.
- 17 *Al-Hadaf*, 26 April 1975, pp. 8–9.
- 18 *Ibid.* There are discrepancies in the nationalities of the bus riders as stated in *al-Hadaf*, *Ibid.*, and in *Ila al-Amam*, 25 April 1975.
- 19 See Internal Security Report, 13 April 1975.
- 20 *Al-Nahar*, 14 April 1975.
- 21 See the entire issue of the PLO organ *Filastin al-Thawra*, 23 April 1975. See also *Ila al-Amam*, 18 April 1975, p. 3; *al-Tha'ir al-'Arabi* 5 May 1975, pp. 19–21 and 6 June 1975, pp. 13–16; and al-Sa'iqa organ *al-Tala'i* 22 April 1975 and 29 April 1975, p. 9.
- 22 *Al-Nahar*, 14 April 1975. See also *Filastin al-Thawra*, 23 April 1975, pp. 24–5.
- 23 *Al-Nahar*, 26 April 1975.
- 24 *Al-Tha'ir al-'Arabi* 15 May 1975, pp. 14–17.
- 25 Mohsin Dalloul, *al-Wasaty* 10 March 1997, p. 32.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 *Al-Nahar*, 14 April 1975. See also *Al-Sayady* 17 April 1975, pp. 4–7.

- 28 Samir Kassir, *La Guerre du Liban. De la Dissension Nationale au Conflit Régional*, Paris: Editions Karthala – CERMOC, 1994): 106. Interview with 'Issam Na'man, 12 July 1996.
- 29 George Hawi, *al-Wasat*, 10 June 1996, p. 32.
- 30 *Filastin al-Thawra*, 23 April 1975, pp. 23–5. George Hawi, *al-Wasaty* 10 June 1996, p. 32. Interview with Fawaz Traboulsi, 12 May 1996.
- 31 Interview with Karim Pakradouni, 6 June 1996.
- 32 *Al-Tala'i*, 22 April 1975, p. 1.
- 33 *Al-Nahar*, 30 April 1975.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 See Khuwairi, *Hawadith Lubnan...*, pp. 51–4.
- 36 *Al-Nahar*, 16 May 1975.
- 37 Kassir, *La Guerre du Liban...*, p. 106; George Hawi, *al-Wasat*, 10 June 1996, pp. 30–1. Interview with 'Issam Na'man, 12 July 1996.
- 38 *Al-Nahar*, 16 May 1975.
- 39 Ibid.; Khuwairi, *Hawadith Lubnan...*, pp. 87–97.
- 40 *Al-Nahar*, 16 May 1975.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid. Kataeb minister George Sa'adeh, who was present at the meeting, confirmed this account. Interview, 7 September 1996.
- 43 According to Karim Pakradouni, Colonel Antoine Dahdah, head of Lebanese General Security, asked Pierre Gemayel to hand in Kataeb Party members to calm down the situation. He then presented a list of seven people chosen, four of whom were outside the country. Interview, 6 June 1996.
- 44 Solh's accusations were not included in the official parliament proceedings. *Al-Nahar*, 16 May 1975.
- 45 Interview with George Sa'adeh, 7 September 1996.
- 46 See Khuwairi, *Hawadith Lubnan...*, pp. 75–6. Interview with 'Issam Na'man, 12 July 1996.
- 47 *Al-Nahar*, 16 May 1975.
- 48 This was confirmed by 'Issam Na'man who contributed in the writing of Solh's resignation speech. Interview, 12 July 1996.

The Breakdown of the Confessional Political Process

Beginning in April, the country plunged into large scale violence. Random abductions of civilians on the basis of their sectarian denominations was practised by the warring factions. This was to become an institutionalised pattern of violence during the 1975–76 war. Like the acquisition of weapons and the recruitment of fighters, abduction and murder became part and parcel of the war machine. On 30 May, following the killing of a Palestinian in Christian-controlled East Beirut, Christians were abducted from streets in West Beirut. Some thirty people were murdered.¹

In May, heavy clashes erupted around the Tal-Za'tar camp in Dikwaneh between PLO guerrillas and Kataeb militiamen resulting in casualties on both sides. As fighting intensified, attempts were made to defuse conflict. Meetings were held between Lebanese, Palestinian and Arab officials, including one between Frangiyeh and Arafat on 14 May 1975 and another on 22 May between the president and several Arab ambassadors. In the latter meeting, Frangiyeh disclosed that in an intercepted telephone conversation between an 'Arab president' and 'an influential leader in Beirut', the Arab president stated that 'Lebanon should be engulfed in a blood bath.'² Frangiyeh did not conceal his anger at what he called attempts by some Arab regimes to instigate turmoil in Lebanon, which, in turn, would benefit Israel.³ An earlier mediation was attempted by the secretary-general of the Arab League, Mahmoud Riad, on the basis of a 'no victor, no vanquished' formula. It led to no concrete results.⁴

The Two-Day Military Cabinet As the security situation continued to deteriorate, Frangiyeh resorted to a drastic action: the formation of a 'military cabinet' on 23 May. Headed by retired Sunni Brigadier Nouredin al-Rifa'i, the cabinet comprised seven army officers, including Army Commander Iskandar Ghanem, who was given the defence portfolio, and one civilian member who was in charge of foreign affairs.⁵ A cabinet controlled by military officers was an unprecedented development in Lebanese politics. It was also the first time that a president resorted to his constitutional prerogatives, both as the country's chief executive and supreme commander of the army, to influence the course of events.

The move ended in utter failure. Only one day after the formation of the cabinet, it was forced to resign in the face of one of the strongest and most effective Muslim oppositions that Lebanese politics has known since independence. In a meeting called for by Sunni Mufti Hassan Khalid, the country's major Sunni, Shia and Druze political and religious leaders issued a strongly-worded communiqué demanding the resignation of the Rifa'i cabinet. Strong opposition to the military cabinet also came from the Maronite leader Raymond Eddé.

The abrupt fall of the military cabinet was a personal setback to Frangiyeh. It was also a strong reminder of the built-in limitations to the ability of the president to resort to constitutional powers in a crisis. In his fifth year in office, Frangiyeh had cooperated with four prime ministers: Sa'eb Salam in the first three years, Amin al-Hafiz for two months, and Takiyeddin and Rashid al-Solh in the last two years. Sunni politics and, by extension, that of

the office of the premiership, was by 1975 a function of a power struggle between two poles: the traditional Sunni political establishment and Kamal Jumblatt. Unable to deal with a premier from outside the small circle of the Sunni political establishment, as was the case with Amin al-Hafiz, Frangiyeh was caught between the rock of a Sunni veto and the hard place of Jumblatt's increasing power.

For Frangiyeh, one possible option to neutralise the Sunni veto was the political counterweight that Jumblatt provided in Sunni politics. It was this option – a Sunni premier backed by Jumblatt but not favoured by the Sunni political establishment – which resulted in the formation of Rashid al-Solh's cabinet in 1974. Frangiyeh's relations with Salam, his former political ally, reached breaking point in 1973. He was not prepared to co-operate with him, nor was Salam willing to work with the president, whom he repeatedly accused of monopolising power. As for Rashid Karame, the other major Sunni candidate for the premiership, he was Frangiyeh's political adversary, both as a leading supporter of his presidential rival Elias Sarkis in the 1970 election, and as a rival *za'im* in the northern region. In short, Frangiyeh had three options: to deal with traditional Sunni leaders such as Salam and Karame; to opt for Jumblatt's political counterweight, as he did in 1974; or to pursue neither alternative and resort to presidential constitutional powers, as he did with the formation of the military cabinet.

The first option was ruled out not only because Salam and Frangiyeh could no longer work together, but also because Salam was strongly vetoed by Jumblatt. Similarly, Frangiyeh sought to avoid Karame, as did Karame, who now seemed to have his eye on the presidency, as he made clear in public pronouncements.⁶ The second option was a political failure. It resulted in the backlash that Rashid al-Solh created upon his resignation. Although 'Abdallah al-Yafi and Takieddin al-Solh might have been acceptable 'compromise' candidates, they were not capable of dealing with the highly explosive situation in mid-1975. Neither Solh nor Yafi had a large and stable power base in the mid-1970s similar to that of Salam and Karame. The circumstances and political calculations facilitating the formation of Takieddin al-Solh's cabinet in 1973 were lacking in 1975. As for Yafi, if he was unable to contain the mild political crisis involving the PLO in December 1968, when he was last prime minister, he was not going to fare any better in 1975.

More crippling to the political process was the de facto Palestinian veto, which permeated the entire political spectrum. No Maronite president was able to overcome the Palestinian obstacle in the absence of the unequivocal support of a strong Sunni premier. But if that could not be found six years earlier in 1969, when the PLO was weaker, what then could be expected in 1975?

Faced with this political deadlock, made all the more difficult by the awkward setting of cabinet politics – Jumblatt vetoing Salam, Salam at odds with Frangiyeh, the latter on bad terms with Karame, Jumblatt running out of Sunni candidates and the dearth of Sunni leaders willing to stand up to the PLO – Frangiyeh opted for the ‘last resort’ alternative. This was a cabinet of his own choosing, giving him a free hand to take whatever measures to halt the breakdown.

Never before were Maronite-Sunni politics within the executive branch of government as deadlocked as in mid-1975.⁷ The two-day military cabinet, perhaps the shortest in the history of military cabinets in the world, provoked a political storm. It was the magnet that brought together former adversaries in opposition to the president.

The Making of a ‘Cabinet At War’

If the collapse of the military cabinet was a political blow to Frangiyeh, the nomination of Karame by the Sunni political and religious establishments to head the new cabinet was a slap in the face.⁸ Not only was Frangiyeh denied the choice between two candidates, he found himself obliged to deal with a man with whom he never had any political dealings. Frangiyeh had no choice but to accept the *fait accompli* of Karame’s premiership. Differences between the two men were patched up, at least on the surface, thanks to the intervention of intermediaries, notably Jumblatt, who found it convenient to back Karame. There remained another problem as complex as that of designating the prime minister: that of forming the cabinet.

After a few weeks of talks and behind the scene consultations, while armed confrontations escalated in various parts of Beirut, a six-member cabinet was formed on 1 July 1975. The selection of the cabinet ministers and the process by which the cabinet was formed were an indication of the high degree of bankruptcy that the political system had reached by mid-1975. The

cabinet was an unsuccessful replica of the first cabinet formed after independence in 1943. Three cabinet ministers, Camille Chamoun, 'Adel Osseiran and Majid Arslan were members of the 1943 cabinet; they even held the same portfolios. Another cabinet minister, Philippe Taqla, was the brother of Salim Taqla, also a member of the 1943 cabinet. Only one member of the Cabinet, Ghassan Tuéni, had nothing to do with the 1943 cabinet.

The cabinet was formed by way of elimination. Like the National Pact, which was based on a double negation agreement, the Karame cabinet was conceived through a similar process. Two major obstacles had to be removed before a viable team of cabinet ministers could be found: the dual veto of Kamal Jumblatt and Pierre Gemayel. Having called for the boycotting of the Kataeb Party, Jumblatt refused to join any cabinet in which the Kataeb would be represented. Gemayel, for his part, was not willing to abide by Jumblatt's dictum, nor was he going to abide by the boycott. This dilemma was partially resolved by keeping both leaders outside the cabinet. That was the revised National Pact's 'no East, no West' formula of the 1970s: no to Jumblatt and no to Gemayel and, by extension, to the kind of radical politics they represented.

This double negation, however, provided no satisfactory solution; acceptable substitutes had to be found to redress the balance. Camille Chamoun, backed by Gemayel and not vetoed by Jumblatt, emerged as the *de facto* balancer in this improbable compromise. But Chamoun's appointment fell short of breaking the deadlock, as he had been a long-time political adversary of Karame since the days of Chehabist rule. The two men had not been on speaking terms for more than seventeen years. But since it was possible to reconcile differences between Karame and Frangiyeh, it was equally possible for Chamoun and Karame to declare a political truce. These 'reconciliations' by default materialised only one day before the cabinet was formally announced. It took an act of hand-shaking between Chamoun and Karame and a brief exchange of pleasantries to thaw the ice after nearly two decades of political enmity between the two men.⁹ One other problem had to be settled. That was the defence portfolio, claimed by both Karame and Chamoun. A deal was struck in which Chamoun assumed the Interior Ministry and Karame the Defence Ministry. With these various obstacles

removed, the only *raison d'être* of the Karame cabinet was a hasty assemblage of political oddities.

Superficially, it seemed as though the cabinet was the outcome of a negotiated settlement between influential Lebanese politicians who, ultimately, were willing, though reluctantly, to leave behind their feuds for the purpose of forming a cabinet of 'national unity.' In reality, however, what made possible the formation of the cabinet was neither internal agreement nor national unity, but the role played by Syrian and Palestinian power-brokers. Without the active intervention of Syrian officials and Arafat, the cabinet would not have seen the light. Put differently, the veto power that the PLO and Damascus had over cabinet politics in mid-1975 would have been sufficient to torpedo any internal agreement- assuming that agreement among Lebanese leaders was possible.

In June 1975, the month during which much of the bargaining took place, Damascus and Arafat shared broad political objectives in Lebanon, which reflected common regional interests. Prior to the signing of the second Egyptian–Israeli disengagement agreement in early September, both parties saw a common interest in containing tension in Lebanon. This in turn facilitated the formation of a new cabinet.

In 1973, the Asad regime made its public political debut in direct intervention in Lebanese politics. But in 1975, Syria was capable of influencing the political process. Syria's intervention through public official channels began with the formation of the military cabinet. Foreign Minister Abdul-Halim Khaddam and General Naji Jamil rushed off to Beirut to discuss this unprecedented development with Frangiyeh. After two days of intensive talks with almost all the major Lebanese politicians, religious dignitaries, as well as Arafat and other PLO officials, the two Syrian envoys succeeded in addressing two issues: the resignation of the military cabinet and support for Karame's designation to the premiership.¹⁰ In another visit in which he was accompanied by Syrian Chief of Staff Hikmat alShihabi, Khaddam spent several days in Beirut trying to put the finishing touches on the soon-to-be born Karame cabinet. He was instrumental in narrowing differences between the Sunni leadership and Arafat and in moderating Jumblatt's position. The change in Jumblatt's attitude occurred on his return from a two-day visit to Damascus.¹¹

Although the Syrian role helped strengthen the Sunni position vis-à-vis Frangiyeh, Damascus did not seek to undermine the latter's position. Syrian leaders feared that a hard-pressed Frangiyeh would seek Arab mediation. Such a move would weaken Syrian influence in Lebanon. In fact, Khaddam's unexpected arrival in Beirut on 29 June, just one day before the cabinet was formed, was prompted by Iraq's call earlier that day for an urgent meeting of Arab foreign ministers to discuss the crisis in Lebanon.¹²

The Palestinian role was aimed at dealing with the Maronite component of the crisis. The 'Ayn al-Rummaneh shooting and subsequent PLO support for Leftist parties' calls to isolate the Kataeb Party had strained Maronite-Palestinian relations. Meetings were held between Palestinian and Maronite leaders to address these issues, notably between Arafat and Chamoun.¹³

Another development was the six-hour talks held between Frangiyeh and a Palestinian delegation headed by Arafat. Present at these talks were the Egyptian and Saudi ambassadors to Lebanon.¹⁴ Arranged by the Saudi Ambassador, Muhammad Mansour al-Rumayh, the meeting was an occasion to discuss various disputes. It was agreed that Arafat would issue a statement clarifying the Palestinian position. Two days later, in a televised statement, Arafat confirmed Palestinian 'respect for Lebanese sovereignty' and stressed that 'the Palestinian revolution was not a political faction siding with one Lebanese group against another.'¹⁵ Arafat's message was well-received, notably by leaders and political parties, including the Kataeb Party, which termed Arafat's message as 'a constructive Palestinian initiative'.¹⁶ Arafat's gesture, added to Mufti Khalid's denial of any decision taken by Muslim leaders to isolate the Kataeb Party,¹⁷ as stated by Jumblatt a few weeks earlier,¹⁸ helped to quell tensions.

Parallel to these publicised meetings, behind-the-scenes Maronite-Palestinian talks were pursued. Arranged by Palestinian intellectual Walid Khalidi and Lebanese businessman Hani Salam, a meeting was held on 12 June at the residence of Palestinian businessman Hassib Sabbagh in Beirut.¹⁹ It brought together Arafat, Abu Iyad and two influential Maronite priests of the Lebanese Maronite Order, Boulos Azzi and Boulos Na'man.²⁰

Prior to the talks, a preliminary three-hour meeting was held between Na'man and Khalidi at the latter's office at the Institute of Palestine Studies in Beirut.²¹ Views were exchanged about the developments with the aim of

finding ways to narrow differences between Maronite and Palestine leaders. Khalidi explained that part of the problem was that PLO leaders coming from the Arab Gulf states had no understanding of Lebanese society, particularly of the Christians, unlike Palestinians from Jerusalem who were familiar with Christian heritage and were sensitive to Christian concerns.²²

In the meeting that grouped Arafat, Abu Iyad, Azzi and Na'man as well as Sabbagh and Khalidi, the two priests explained Maronite support for the Palestinian cause prior to and after 1948, and stressed that what they opposed was PLO's violations of Lebanese sovereignty and ill-conceived policies which put the PLO in direct confrontation with the Christians.²³ Azzi and Na'man, who had consulted with Maronite leaders prior to the meeting, criticised PLO support for the isolation of the Kataeb Party and told their Palestinian interlocutors that this was a grave mistake, and that it widened the rift between Christian public opinion and the PLO.²⁴ To this Arafat replied that the PLO was not antagonistic to the Maronites and that extremism was the work of Kamal Jumblatt and the Lebanese Left who were supported by Palestinian Leftist groups and not by Fateh.²⁵ He also accused Libya and Syria of escalating warfare.²⁶ Abu Iyad, for his part, reiterated Arafat's position and added that he was disturbed about information that money was being raised by Maronite leaders to purchase weapons. Azzi and Na'man confirmed Abu Iyad's information and argued that this was a defensive measure in reaction to the PLO's military involvement in the disturbances and unwillingness to refrain from intervening in internal Lebanese affairs.²⁷ Arafat's comment was to suggest that the money should be used to purchase land in Palestine.²⁸

A follow-up meeting was held three days later on 15 June 1975 at the University of the Holy Spirit in Kaslik, near Jounieh. This time, Arafat sent two representatives, Hani al-Hassan and Abu al-Za'im. The meeting was intended to keep channels open; no new issues were explored.²⁹ The next important meeting between the two sides took place four months later in October, following the renewal of fighting in September (discussed later).

Meanwhile, in cabinet politics, only when all obstacles were removed was it possible to pave the way for the formation of the first wartime cabinet. This meant that, from now on, a failure to maintain consensus among all internal and external parties would result in a crisis. The most destabilising

scenario would be a rift between the two principal external power-brokers, Syria and the PLO. Should Asad and Arafat be at loggerheads regarding a particular issue in Lebanon, it would be difficult to find mediators capable of narrowing Syrian-Palestinian differences.

The Caesarean birth of the Karame cabinet marked the culmination of political paralysis in the post-1943 Lebanese politics of confessional balancing. A cabinet deriving its *raison d'être* from the coincidental overlap of inter-Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian interests had a frail existence and a short life-span. Under the best of circumstances, the most the cabinet could achieve was to convene regular meetings and to maintain a minimum degree of internal cohesion. But that was hardly possible in mid-1975.

The Military Balance in 1975

In June–July 1975 the military balance in the country was largely in favour of the PLO. Table 22.1 shows the number of Palestinian armed men and heavy weapons at the disposal of Palestinian organisations. Of the eight organisations, Fateh had the largest number of armed men (6,000) out of a total of 19,200, followed by the Syrian-controlled Sa'iqa (4,000), the DFLP and the Arab Liberation Front. Table 22.2 shows the number of armed men and heavy weapons of eight Palestinian organisations throughout the country. In October 1975 Fateh had the largest number of fighters (7,000) and was the best equipped, followed by Sa'iqa (4,500). The fighting force of other major organisations was of almost equal size. The distribution of armed men in seven major camps in October 1975 was as follows:³⁰ al-Rashidiyeh (73,000), 'Ayn al-Helweh (4,500), Tal-Za'tar (3,225), Shatila (2,500), Nahr al-Barid (1,700), al-Burj al-Shimali (1,625) and Borj al-Barajneh (1,300). Therefore, the largest concentration was in the south and the Beirut area. Table 22.3 shows the number and type of heavy weapons in Palestinian camps in October 1975.

Table 22.1 Number of Armed Men and Heavy Weapons of Palestinian Organisations (18/6/1975)

Organisations	Number of armed men	Mortar 120	Mortar 81	Mortar 60	Cannon 75	Cannon 106	Cannon Moudad	SAM 7	Missile S/S	Heavy Machine Guns	RPG
Fateh	6000	30	50	50	25	15	50	40	Not Known	120	Not Specified
Sa'iq	4000	15	20	15	15	10	25	30	Not Known	75	Not Specified
PFLP	2000	-	3	5		-	-	-	Not Known	25	Not Specified
DFLP	2500	3	5	10	2	-	3	-	Not Known	25	Not Specified
PFLP-G.C.	2000	4	5	10	2	2	3	-	Not Known	35	Not Specified
Arab Liberation Front	2500	5	6	10	3	3	15	-	Not Known	30	Not Specified
Popular Struggle Front	200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-
TOTAL	19200	57	89	100	47	30	96	70	Not Known	315	Not Specified

Source: Lebanese Army Intelligence Report.

Table 22.2 Number of Armed Men and Weapons of Palestinian Organisations (20/10/1975)

	Number of armed men	Mortar 120	Mortar 81	Mortar 60	Cannon 75	Cannon 106	Anti-Aircraft	SAM 7	Heavy Machine Guns
Fateh	7000	30	50	50	25	15	50	40	120
Sa'iq	4500	15	20	15	15	10	25	30	75
PFLP	2000	-	3	5	-	-	-	-	25
DFLP	2500	3	5	10	2	-	3	-	25
PFLP-GC	2000	4	5	10	2	2	3	-	35
Arab Liberation Front	2500	5	6	10	3	3	15	-	30
Popular Resistance	2200	5	5	5	3	3	20	20	30
Popular Struggle Front	200	-		-	-	-	-	-	5
TOTAL	22900	62	94	105	50	33	116	90	345

Source: Lebanese Army Intelligence Report.

Table 22.3 Number and Type of Weapons in Palestinian Camps (20/10/1975)

Type	Number
Mortar 120	61
Mortar 81	94
Mortar 60	114
Canon 75	51
Doshka	112
Krinov	118
RPG7	278
12.7/500 Machine Guns	109
Tank	2
Anti-Aircraft Canons	110
SAM 7	204
Canon 106	36
Total	1289

Source: Lebanese Army Intelligence Report.

In 1975–76, the Lebanese army was 19,000 strong.³¹ Only about half that number was a fighting force.³² The number of members, militiamen and weapons available to Lebanese parties in mid-1975 are shown in Table 22.4. The number of light personal weapons (*silah fardi*) is specified, while the specification of heavy weapons is not detailed. The largest number of militiamen was that of the Kataeb Party (8,000), followed by the Lebanese Communist Party and the Progressive Socialist Party (5,000 each) and by the Syrian Social Nationalist Party and the National Liberal Party (4,000 each). Leftist, nationalist and Muslim-based parties, which were part of the LNM, had a total number of 18,700 militiamen while Christian-based parties had 12,000. The Shia Amal movement, which was then small, is not included, as it was made public in July 1975.

Table 22.4 Membership, Militiamen and Light Weapons of Major Lebanese Parties (1975)

	No. of members	No. of militiamen	No. of personal weapons	Total no. of weapons	Main sponsor(s)
Ba'th Party (pro-Iraq)	2000	1500	5000	not specified	Iraq
Syrian Social Nationalist Party	11000	4000	5000	25	Lebanese emigrants Iraq; Libya
Organisation of Communist Action	400	100	200	-	Communist countries
al-Murabitun	200	200	200	30	Libya
Movement of 24 October	700	500	400	10	Libya
Arab Labour Socialist Party	600	200	-	-	Iraq
Ba'th Party (pro-Syria)	2000	2000	all members	50	Syria
Lebanese Communist Party	40000	5000	10000	-	Communist countries
Progressive Socialist Party	6000	5000	6000	15	E. Germany; Syria; Iraq; USSR
Association of Working People (Nasserite group)	700	200	300	-	Syria; Libya; Egypt
Islamic Liberation Party	300	-	-	-	-
Arab Ba'th Party (Jadid wing)	500	-	50	-	Algeria; Iraq
al-Najjada Party (corrective movement)	100	100	100	5	The party that pays more
al-Najjada Party	500	100			Saudi Arabia; Qatar; Kuwait; Egypt
Kataeb Party	40000	8000	all members	not specified	Party deputies/ <i>zu'ama</i>
National Liberal Party	15000	4000	all members	not specified	Iran; USA;
National Bloc Party	5000	-	some members	-	Jordan; party deputies France; party deputies
Tachnag Party	6000	-	-	-	-
Hentshag	2000	500	500	-	-

Source: Lebanese Army Intelligence Report dated 17/7/1975.

Notes

- 1 Chami and Castoriades, *Days of Tragedy...*, p. 382; *Al-Nahar*, 1 June 1975.
- 2 Khuwairi, *Hawadith Lubnan...*, pp. 82–4.
- 3 Ibid., p. 83.
- 4 *Al-Ushbu' al-'Arabi*, 21 March 1975, pp. 18–19
- 5 Military officers were: Iskandar Ghanem, Moussa Kan'an, Sa'id Nasrallah, Fawzi alKhatib, François Genadry, Zein Makki and one civilian Lucien Dahdah.
- 6 *Al-Nahar*, 8 and 17 May 1975.
- 7 In the 1958 crisis, President Chamoun was backed by Premier Sami al-Solh, who stayed in office until the end of his term despite opposition by the Sunni political establishment.
- 8 According to Frangiyeh, Karame was 'imposed on him as prime minister by the Sunni leadership' in *Al-Nahar*, 14 March 1976.
- 9 Fuad Mattar, *Suqut al-Imbaraturiyya al-Lubnaniyya*, vol. I (Beirut: Dar al-Qadaya, 1976): 86.
- 10 For details, see Mattar, Ibid., pp. 24–31.
- 11 Ibid., p. 60 and pp. 84–5.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 77–80.
- 13 *Al-Nahar*, 28 June 1975.
- 14 Ibid., 24 June 1975. Present in the meeting were Abu Iyad, Walid Khalidi, Hassib Sabbagh and two Lebanese Army officers. See also Mattar, *Suqut...*, pp. 63–6.
- 15 See text in Mattar, Ibid., pp. 228–35.
- 16 Ibid., pp. 68–9.
- 17 *Al-Nahar*, 30 June 1975.
- 18 Ibid., 4 June 1975.
- 19 Interview with Father Boulos Na'man, former Superior-General of the Lebanese Maronite Order, 23 October 1997.
- 20 Father Azzi was a former Superior-General of the Lebanese Maronite Order.
- 21 Interview with Father Boulos Na'man, 23 October 1997.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Lebanese Army Intelligence Report (20/10/1975).
- 31 Khalidi, *Conflict...*, p. 67.
- 32 Interview with a former high-ranking Lebanese army officer, 20 March 1995

Anarchy, Wartime Reform and Dialogue

Following the formation of the Karame cabinet, the security situation during July and August improved. The month of July was marked by three events: the raid by unknown gunmen on a remote Christian village in the Beqa; the public acknowledgement of the Shia militia Amal, and the kidnapping of an American military officer in Beirut.

The unprovoked raid by armed men on the Beqa village of al-Qaa' in the largely Shia-inhabited Hermel region resulted in the death of a large number of civilians.¹ It was an alarming signal for isolated Christian villages in remote areas. Although the incident was contained, thanks to Musa al-Sadr's intervention, similar attacks on villages took place in other parts of the country.

The event which came as a surprise to many Lebanese was the appearance of a new sectarian militia. This was Amal (the Lebanese Resistance Battalion), the military wing of the Shia-based Movement of the Deprived. Amal was made public in July 1975, but only because a bomb exploded accidentally in a training camp run by Fateh in the Ba'albak area. The explosion resulted in the deaths of forty militiamen and the injury of more than a hundred.² Although Amal was the most recent addition to Lebanon's sectarian militias, the incident caused a great deal of embarrassment for Sadr, the founder and leader of the Movement of the Deprived. Only a few days before the explosion Sadr ended a five-day hunger strike in protest against the senseless violence that had swept the country.

In announcing the existence of Amal, Sadr emphasised that the purpose of the militia was to train people to defend the south from Israeli aggression.³

For some Lebanese – particularly those Christian leaders and intellectuals who supported Sadr and came to see him as a moderate and reformist leader – the appearance of an armed organisation was another disappointment to add to the many unpleasant surprises that the war was yet to reveal.

Another event that followed the formation of the cabinet was the kidnapping of a regional officer of US AID, Colonel Ernest Morgan, while travelling in a taxi in Beirut. The kidnappers, the Organisation of Socialist Revolutionary Action, a previously unknown group closely linked to Jibril's PFLP-GC, demanded the supply of food, clothing and construction materials in return for the release of the American hostage.⁴ Although Morgan was released, and some of those implicated in the kidnapping were arrested, the incident was couched in a great deal of mystery. Why did Morgan leave his hotel, on a day of heavy shelling, presumably to go to the airport to buy a newspaper? Who was really behind this brief kidnapping? These were the questions that observers raised and later came to associate with other similar 'mysterious' events, which were frequent in the mid-1970s.

In August, relative calm prevailed in Beirut,⁵ and people began to feel a sense of normality in their daily lives. Battles on the political front, however, began to heat up. Two important political stands were made on 18 August. One was the publication of an article written by Hussein al-Quwatli, the director of the office of Sunni Mufti Hassan Khalid. The other was the announcement of a transitional programme for reform put out by the coalition of Leftist and nationalist parties, the Lebanese National Movement (LNM).

The Sunni Ultimatum While the advocacy of a reformist political platform by the LNM was not unexpected, most surprising was Quwatli's statement, which reflected a novel Sunni reading of the state of affairs. In a revealing essay published in the Beirut daily, *al-Safir*, the author spelled out the 'Muslim position' towards the issues at the centre of political

debate.⁶ The message was addressed to the Christians, particularly Maronites.

According to Quwatli, the Lebanese ‘formula’ (*al-sigha*) was intended to substitute the authority of Islam (*sultat al-Islam*) by the authority of the Christians, and more precisely ‘Maronite rule’ (*al-hukm al-maruni*). This is the ‘essence of the problem’, argues Quwatli, for this is done ‘at the expense of equality (*al-musawat*) and Muslim prerogatives and their rightful share in the system’. While these arguments mirrored general Muslim grievances, the novelty in Quwatli’s statement was the way in which he formulated Muslim grievances. Never before in internal political discourse had Muslim demands been linked to Islam as a doctrine of rule by the Sunni religious establishment. For Quwatli, ‘the Muslims in Lebanon gave up their goals to build an Islamic order since independence and were silent about their wishes during the mandate because of the emergence of the idea of Arab nationalism, which they saw, along with some enlightened Christians, as a common denominator ... bringing together Muslims and Christians in one political and social entity.’

In his view, the Muslims in Lebanon had already offered a major ‘concession’ (*tanazul*) by not advocating the establishment of an ‘Islamic state in Lebanon. By doing that they have seriously endangered their religious doctrine.’ This is because, writes Quwatli, The true Muslim (‘al-Muslim al-Muslim’) cannot be indifferent towards the state ... for Islamic doctrine cannot be practised in isolation of [political] rule.’ This, he concludes, ‘is not a matter of fanaticism, but a genuine manifestation of true Islam.’ He then asks what ‘concessions’ are Christians willing to make in return for Muslim ‘concessions’ of not seeking to live in conformity with Islamic doctrine. To redress the balance and establish equality (*al-musawat*), argues Quwatli, is to give up ‘Christian prerogatives in the state’ and replace them instead by ‘patriotic rule’ (*al-hukm al-watani*). This, he stresses, ‘is only a middle ground solution (*hal wasat*), as the basic solution (*al-hal al-asasi*) for Muslims is the establishment of an Islamic state.’

In the last section of the article, Quwatli discusses the question of secularism (*al-'almana*). He warns Christians not to press for secularism as a way to ‘embarrass (*ihraj*) the Muslims since in Islam there is no

separation between religion and state'. Christian insistence on secularism is conducive to one of two alternatives: 'the establishment of an Islamic state, something rejected by Christians; or Maronite consolidation of the Christian state in Lebanon, something also rejected by Muslims.'

The message is clear: either Christian acceptance of Lebanon on Muslim terms – that is, a self-defined notion of equality and categorical rejection of a secular political order – or else rule should be in line with Islamic doctrine. For Quwatli, Muslims have made their share of concession by not insisting on living as 'true Muslims' in an Islamic state.

The statement, uttered after the outbreak of war, was less intended to convey Muslim grievances and initiate dialogue than to give Christians an ultimatum. Should they fail to meet Muslim demands, as stated by Quwatli, Muslims would then have to resort to the Islamic option. Irrespective of Quwatli's political intentions, for many Christians, the message was tantamount to a poorly concealed threat. Quwatli's words were all the more alarming, for he was a close associate of Mufti Khalid and held an official position in Dar al-Fatwa.⁷

This reading differed drastically from the traditional Sunni position on Arab nationalism, as expressed by Kazim al-Solh, a leading Sunni advocate of independent Lebanon. Writing in the mid-1930s, Solh argued that Christians should be converted to Arabism by way of co-optation. Thus by accepting Greater Lebanon, Christians and particularly Maronites, would no longer seek support from Western powers to preserve autonomy.⁸ In 1975, however, this position was no longer tenable, for the issue of dispute was not Christian loyalty to a Muslim defined version of Arabism; rather the demand for Muslim control of the state was couched in the vague expression of 'patriotic rule' (*al-hukm al-watani*). While Muslims had grievances to express – though the Shia more justifiably than the Sunni – the formulation of these demands in such a confrontational manner, at a time of great political uncertainty and communal distrust, was not conducive to constructive national dialogue.

The National Movement's Platform: Wartime Reform

Another important stand taken in August 1975 was

that of the Lebanese National Movement, the Jumblatt-led coalition of Leftist and predominantly Arab nationalist parties. Although Leftist parties have been active in Lebanon and took part in parliamentary elections, they remained outside mainstream Lebanese politics. It was not until the second half of the 1960s that Leftist parties became more involved in politics. The Arab defeat in the 1967 war gave rise to a radical Left both in Lebanon and in the Arab world in general.⁹

Support for the PLO was the cause that brought unity to an otherwise divided Left. But what really gave the Left a national stature and political influence in internal Lebanese politics was Jumblatt's leadership. In his capacity as minister of the interior in 1970, Jumblatt legalised several Leftist and nationalist parties. He also helped integrate the Leftist political platform in the political process by moving it closer to the mainstream. Jumblatt, the 'feudal' Druze *za'im* with a solid power base immune to the ups and downs of Lebanese politics, gave Leftist parties an unprecedented political safety valve and indispensable support.¹⁰

An early attempt to form a Leftist coalition, known as the Front of Progressive Parties, Organisations and Personalities, was made in the summer of 1965.¹¹ The Front was short-lived and had little impact on the political process. But the first serious attempt at Leftist-based coalition politics was the formation of the Front of National and Progressive Parties and Forces in 1972. The Front, which came to be known as the LNM, included six major parties and several other smaller parties and groupings.¹² In addition to Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party, the LNM included two communist parties (the Lebanese Communist Party and the Organisation of Communist Action), two Arab nationalist parties (Nasserites and Ba'thists) and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party.¹³

It was not until after the outbreak of war that the LNM proposed a programme for reform. Jumblatt announced the programme on 18 August 1975 during the lull that separated the first and second 'rounds' of fighting. The programme opened with an introduction and was composed of seven parts.¹⁴ The introduction addressed the nature of the political, economic and social crises that beset the country. At a national level, the programme noted that attempts were made to 'isolate Lebanon from the Arab region' thus leading to its 'withdrawal from the nationalist struggle against the Zionist enemy'.¹⁵ It then called for Lebanon's 'embrace (*ihtidan*) of the Palestinian revolution as a force fighting not only to liberate its land but also to defend Lebanon.'¹⁶ At the economic and social levels, the programme attributed Lebanon's problems to its capitalist system, which increased unemployment and aggravated the deprivation of the working class.

The LNM's main target was the political system. For the LNM, political confessionalism was the source of Lebanon's political, social and economic ills. It deepened monopolistic control of a particular 'political class' over national resources and strengthened Lebanon's 'isolation' in Arab politics. The programme also stressed that access to the forces of change was blocked while the imbalance between the executive and the legislative branches of government had undermined democracy. To deal with these problems, the LNM proposed change by democratic means. The alternative would be to modernise Lebanon's reactionary political system and its move towards a democratic system capable of dealing with the socio-economic problems while meeting Lebanon's duties of belonging to the Arab world at both local (*watani*) and national (*qawmi*) levels.¹⁷

The first part of the programme, entitled 'the abolition of political confessionalism', called for the elimination of all forms of confessionalism as a first step towards secularism. The first stage would include the abolition of political confessionalism in parliamentary representation, the civil service, the judicial system and in the army.

The second part, entitled 'democratic reform of popular representation', advocated changes in the electoral laws. It proposed the following: to make the entire country one electoral constituency, to adopt proportional representation, to abolish representation on a sectarian basis, to increase the number of seats to one deputy for every 10,000 eligible voters, to lower the

voting age to eighteen, to fix the retirement age for deputies at sixty-four, and to adopt several other administrative measures to improve the conduct of elections. The programme called for administrative decentralisation (ten *Mohafaza*) and proposed to increase the power of elected local and municipal councils.

The third part dealt with the separation and balance of power between the three branches of government. A new elected Upper House was proposed where the various professional, economic, social and cultural organisations would be represented. The power of the president to dissolve the Chamber would be restricted, and the Chamber would select the prime minister. The appointment of the cabinet would be approved by both the prime minister and the president. The latter would have no power to dismiss the cabinet. Moreover, a supreme court would be established to examine the constitutionality of laws, and a special court would be formed to prosecute presidents and ministers. Finally, a voluntary civil personal status law would be provided.

Part four of the programme addressed the reform of government administration. Part five advocated the restructuring of the army. It called for the non-interference of the army in internal politics and for the abolition of confessionalism in the recruitment and in the internal organisation of the army. The sixth and seventh parts of the programme called for the protection of the individual's rights and liberties and for the formation of a constituent assembly of 250 members, respectively. The assembly would be elected on a non-sectarian basis. It would have to conduct a dialogue on the proposed reforms and enact the constitutional laws needed for their realisation.

Needless to say, the LNM's transitional programme was one of the most comprehensive and ambitious reform platforms that Lebanon had seen since the Chehab presidency. While the programme contained novel ideas, the problem by mid-1975 was less the dearth of ideas to reform the system than the way in which these ideas could be implemented. Several problems stood in the way of a proper implementation of the programme.

First, the timing of the proposal was not favourable. It was announced after the outbreak of war, at a time of high political and sectarian polarisation. The declared intention behind the LNM's proposal was to provide a settlement to the conflict. But whatever reforms were proposed,

they were now associated with the war. Even if the leaders of the LNM were committed to non-violent democratic reform, the situation after April 1975 was such that change by way of violence overtook any other form of change.

A by-product of war conditions was the problem of finding the effective mechanism to implement reform at a time when the political process had reached a high degree of paralysis, as was the case with the formation of the Karame cabinet. The proposed plan leading to the promulgation of a new constitution could not be handled by government institutions through the legitimate instruments of change that were at the disposal of the state. Parliament, the body that should approve constitutional change, was completely paralysed. It could no longer convene, not only for political reasons, but also because of the deteriorating security situation at the centre of Beirut. A few weeks after the announcement of the LNM's programme, the parliament building was sacked. If cabinet and parliament were inactive, it was difficult, if not impossible, to elect a non-sectarian constituent assembly of 250 members to act on the reforms, as proposed by the LNM.

Third, as the war intensified, beginning in early September 1975 – that is, two weeks after the announcement of the programme – no Lebanese party or leader was in a position to implement any changes which would bring an end to warfare. Non-Lebanese parties were called upon to mediate between the warring factions. It was Syria that came to assume this role by bringing together the protagonists to the negotiating table by forming the National Dialogue Committee and later by sponsoring the Constitutional Document in February 1976 (discussed later). But none of these attempts helped end the war.

Another problem associated with the reform plan had to do with the divergent positions of the protagonists regarding its content. Three issues were of primary importance: the abolition of political confessionalism, secularism and the Palestinian armed presence. No two parties saw eye to eye on these issues. Traditional Muslim leaders rejected secularism while Christian leaders supported it. Muslim leaders would not insist on the abolition of confessionalism if presidential power was constrained and if the imbalance in confessional representation in parliament was redressed. But for Jumblatt and the Left, change that fell short of ending political confessionalism was not acceptable. Christian leaders, for their part, were

willing to redress the imbalance but opposed change that fell short of secularism.

In reality, political de-confessionalism was the lowest common denominator shared by the parties and leaders of the LNM. The Organisation of Communist Action, headed by Mohsin Ibrahim, and the Lebanese Communist Party, headed by George Hawi, would have opted for a more radical political and economic platform were it not for the moderating influence of Kamal Jumblatt.¹⁸ But Jumblatt, who had more at stake than Leftist leaders, had to cater for conflicting interests. What he needed was a functional deal that was politically viable to preserve Muslim support for the LNM's platform, particularly from the Sunni political and religious establishment. The compromise between Jumblatt's pragmatism and Leftist maximalism was to opt for a 'transitional' (*marhali*) programme of reform, thus leaving the door open for change in the future. For Jumblatt, the real objective was not secularism but the abolition of representation along sectarian lines (*al-mazhabiyya*). He instead favoured representation along confessional lines. This objective constituted Jumblatt's undeclared political bottom line in mid-1975.

The other contentious issue, by far more problematic, was the PLO. On this issue, there lay deep differences. Opinion was rigidly divided: Christian leaders saw an irreconcilable chasm between the imperatives of national sovereignty and PLO military presence, while Muslim leaders and the Left called for unconditional support for the Palestinian Resistance. Whether before or after the LNM's platform, no agreement regarding the PLO was possible. And following the outbreak of war, no formula for a settlement involving the PLO was acceptable to the warring factions, both Lebanese and Palestinian.

A final observation concerns the composition of the LNM both at the level of member parties and as a political coalition. Each of the major parties constituting the LNM had its own power base and political structure. The LNM, however, was not a coalition with a well-defined structure.¹⁹ As a loose grouping of political allies, the LNM was ill-equipped to transform Lebanon's political system while maintaining internal cohesion and popular support that went beyond its narrow partisan base. The political and ideological differences dividing some parties of the LNM were too deep to

preserve unity and political cohesion within it. Apart from competition and traditional political rivalries, the parties of the LNM mirrored differences among foreign sponsors. The latter had scores to settle before and after Lebanon's war. The two Ba'thist parties (the pro-Syrian and the pro-Iraqi), the two communist parties and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, all having ties with various PLO groups as well as with Syria, Libya and Iraq, were in no position to implement a transformation in Lebanon's political, economic and social systems, let alone make it durable under the circumstances which prevailed in the mid-1970s.

The LNM's programme embodied ideas for change, which were part of the political discourse prior to the war. With the exception of two issues, political deconfessionalism and the PLO, all other issues were either negotiable or were not a source of disagreement among the Lebanese. While the PLO problem was beyond settlement, the abolition of confessionalism, which touched on the structure of power, was the crux of the matter for Jumblatt and the Left. The political prelude for this was Rashid al-Solh's resignation speech in parliament, in which he called for the restructuring of power. According to Waddah Sharara, it was more the power equation that concerned the parties of the LNM rather than reform; the change that they sought concerned their position vis-à-vis power (*sulta*) without altering the basis of power vis-à-vis the people.²⁰

The Law of the Gun, the Law of the Land Prior to the renewal of large scale fighting by the end of August, President Frangiyeh made a major statement that helped to moderate the political debate. In a speech delivered on the occasion of the inauguration of a statue of Amir Fakhr al-Din in the Druze village of Ba'qlin, Frangiyeh stated that the constitution was not a 'divine revelation, but a document that could be adapted to accommodate change.²¹ Frangiyeh's

flexible position was well received, but it had little bearing on the deteriorating security situation in various parts of the country.

As Karame continued to reassure the Lebanese in his public pronouncements that the country would not witness further fighting, the security situation continued to deteriorate. Clashes erupted in the Christian city of Zahleh in the Beqa and in the northern city of Tripoli, Lebanon's second largest city. In both places, clashes were instigated by skirmishes between armed individuals. By then, tension was so high that even the slightest verbal exchange between two armed individuals was sufficient to provoke violence which would quickly spread to various parts of the country. In Zahleh, local armed men clashed with Palestinian guerrillas. The fighting continued for several days and resulted in the deaths of twenty-eight people and the injury of many others.²² This inaugurated a new 'round' of fighting after a lull of two months following the formation of the Karame cabinet.

The more serious confrontation occurred in Tripoli and spread to surrounding localities. Clashes were instigated by a car accident involving a driver from Tripoli and another from the neighbouring Maronite town of Zgharta.²³ This led to the shooting of the Muslim driver from Tripoli. Soon afterwards armed men in Tripoli began kidnapping Christians from Zgharta. In retaliation, armed men from Zgharta set up roadblocks on the outskirts of Tripoli and did their share of kidnapping.²⁴

This wave of violence was temporarily contained following the release of the detainees. The next day clashes erupted in Tripoli. A Lebanese army barracks in the city was the target of direct shelling from Palestinian positions. Eighteen soldiers were injured.²⁵ Three Greek Orthodox priests were also kidnapped that day in Tripoli, but were later released. Shelling and rumours of kidnapping and counter-kidnapping kept many armed individuals alert. Disturbances were also reported in the nearby Kura region, where skirmishes took place between Zgharta armed men and supporters of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party and the Lebanese Communist Party.²⁶

As local leaders succeeded in containing the Kura feud, another violent incident occurred in Darayya, near Tripoli. A bus carrying kidnapped people back to Tripoli, as part of the exchange agreement made between Zgharta and Tripoli leaders, was fired upon by an armed man from the Frangiyeh family, killing twelve and injuring seven others.²⁷ The assailant had just learned of the killing of his brother in Tripoli.²⁸ The shooting was widely condemned. Some Muslim leaders compared the Darayya killing to the massacre of Palestinians by Jews in the Palestinian village of Deir Yassin.²⁹

Heavy fighting spread to the outskirts of Tripoli. Permanent demarcation lines separating Tripoli and Zgharta militiamen were now in place. Attacks and counter-attacks in which Palestinians took part alongside Tripoli militiamen continued for several days,³⁰ as did the sectarian killings. This time the targets were three elderly Maronite monks murdered by unknown gunmen in a monastery near Tripoli.³¹ Two days later, a small Maronite village in 'Akkar, Beit Millat, was attacked by gunmen who went on the rampage, destroying property, killing several people.³² Confrontations took place in the region, notably an attack on the Christian town of Qbayyat in 'Akkar many of whose inhabitants served in the Lebanese army. The siege of the town provoked a rebellion by officers and soldiers from Qbayyat based in an army barracks in Jounieh.

In the face of the increasing violence, which had by now acquired alarming sectarian overtones, the cabinet was hard pressed to prevent the escalation of sectarian violence. The army was the only force capable of preventing such incidents. But the use of the army to put an end to the fighting between armed men from the hometowns of President Frangiyeh and Premier Karame (Zgharta and Tripoli respectively) was a delicate matter. The situation was made all the more complex by Jumblatt's opposition to the deployment of the army in Tripoli. For him, stability would come only through the transformation of the political system.³³

As in previous crises, this one was settled by default. For Muslim leaders, notably Karame, to accept the deployment of troops in Tripoli a new army commander had to be appointed to replace General Iskandar Ghanem.³⁴ But the appointment of General Hanna Sa'id, replacing Ghanem, and the approval of an army reform plan by the cabinet, was of little help in enabling the army to undertake the necessary military action to end the

fighting. Army troops were deployed, but only as a buffer force between the combatants. Stuck in the middle with no orders to intervene militarily, the army ended up being a target of shelling from both sides. In reality, the deployment of the army in Tripoli would not have materialised were it not for Arafat's support. Arafat was instrumental in convincing Jumblatt to call off a strike of Leftist parties in Tripoli. This, in turn, facilitated Karame's task.³⁵

A few days later, army troops clashed with several armed followers of Faruq alMuqaddam, the leader of a Tripoli-based Fateh-backed militia. Fourteen militiamen were killed.³⁶ The incident occurred while armed men attempted to force their way through an army checkpoint on their way back to Tripoli after they had attacked a beach resort near Tripoli, owned by a man from the Frangiyeh family.³⁷ The next day several Christian-owned shops and houses in Tripoli belonging to individuals from Zgharta were bombed and looted. By then, sectarian animosity reached unprecedented heights, while the army was practically paralysed. At this stage, Karame, while still opposed to army intervention, called upon the Syrian controlled Palestine Liberation Army to bring order to the city.³⁸ Karame's decision was taken at a meeting of cabinet ministers in the Sérail, without informing Frangiyeh.³⁹ Also upon Karame's request three guerrilla battalions were transferred from the south to Tripoli.⁴⁰ Upon learning that Syrian troops entered Lebanon's northern border, Frangiyeh contacted Syrian President Asad who informed him of Karame's decision, and explained that the troops were from the Palestine Liberation Army.⁴¹

Deeply divided, ineffective and weak, the government now ruled only on paper. Christian leaders saw one last alternative to halt the process of disintegration: a forceful intervention by the army. Having replaced Ghanem by a low-key officer, and having agreed to restructure the army command, Frangiyeh and other Maronite leaders hoped that Karame and other Sunni leaders would support a forceful army intervention, particularly in Beirut. But this was not forthcoming. But even if some Sunni leaders were willing to support a limited army intervention in Beirut, Jumblatt and the PLO-supported Left were categorically opposed to any kind of army action.⁴² Shia leaders, for their part, were in favour of army intervention.

For Musa al-Sadr, the army intervention in Tripoli was ‘a natural and proper measure’.⁴³

Faced by a strong Sunni-Leftist opposition even to a limited army intervention, Maronite leaders took matters into their own hands and went on the offensive. The bombardment of the commercial district in downtown Beirut by Christian forces was intended to break the deadlock and to force the army to intervene. The attempt failed and the army was further paralysed. For the Maronite leadership, the failure of this ‘rescue attempt’, after having made a number of political concessions, was the last act of faith they were prepared to contribute to the decisions of a divided and paralysed government.

National Dialogue for a National War As in previous attempts to end the conflict, Arab mediators were called upon to contain the fighting. Prior to its open military involvement in the war, Damascus was the de facto mediator between the three groups of protagonists: Lebanese versus Lebanese; Lebanese versus Palestinian, and Palestinian versus Palestinian. By September 1975 Syria was in a unique position to influence the course of Lebanon’s multiple wars.

At that time, Syria had calculations to make as the region entered a new phase in the post-1973 Arab–Israeli conflict. With the signing of the second Sinai disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel in September 1975, Damascus now viewed the war in Lebanon from a broader regional perspective. From then on, Lebanon and, more accurately, the PLO in Lebanon, assumed an unprecedented political significance in Syria’s strategic calculations both in inter-Arab and Arab-Israeli politics. Indicative of these changing calculations was a statement made by Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam two days after his arrival in Beirut on 19 September, that ‘syria’s security is a function of Lebanon’s security’.⁴⁴ This reading was

elaborated by a more revealing statement made by Khaddam in which he said that 'turmoil in Lebanon was part of a conspiracy to serve the hidden objectives of the Sinai II agreement'.⁴⁵

Following a few days of talks with Lebanese and Palestinian leaders, a new instrument was found to make Lebanese politicians speak to one another, since a peaceful and lasting settlement to the conflict was not possible. This was the formation of the National Dialogue Committee (Lajnat al-Hiwar al-Watani) on 24 September 1975. Twenty leading political and intellectual figures from Lebanon's major communities were brought to the negotiating table to exchange ideas' about reforming the political system and ending the war.⁴⁶

The agenda of the National Dialogue Committee, which held nine sessions over a period of two months, included three headings: political, economic and social reform. Three sub-committees were formed to address each of the issues. The political reform committee, which held six sessions, was the most active. Khaddam attended the opening session and emphasised the need for a national agreement'.⁴⁷ The talks centred on the abolition of political confessionalism – a Muslim/Leftist demand – and on national sovereignty – a Christian demand.

On the first issue, the gap could not be bridged, especially between Jumblatt, who insisted on changing the political system, and Gemayel, who opposed proposals to amend the Constitution; on the second, there was not even room for dialogue since Jumblatt and Muslim leaders, notably Karame and Salam, insisted that the PLO was not a participant in the war while Gemayel and Chamoun held the opposite view.⁴⁸ The issue of Frangiyeh's resignation was also raised by Raymond Eddé and Sa'eb Salam but was rejected by others, including 'Assem Qanso, head of the Lebanese branch of the pro-Syrian Ba'th Party.⁴⁹ Qanso argued that the crisis involved deeper issues than the resignation of the president.⁵⁰

The political significance of the National Dialogue Committee was Syria's increasing influence in internal Lebanese politics: at the level of sectarian politics and not only at the level of the state, as was the case before. The real behind-the-scenes power-broker in the National Dialogue Committee was Khaddam,⁵¹ and the most vocal critic of the Committee was the pro-Iraqi Ba'th Party, which had no representative on the Committee.⁵²

During Committee meetings, the Syrian position alternated between giving support to the position of the Muslim leadership and the Left and exercising a moderating influence on them, particularly on Jumblatt. This was the beginning of a more visible Syrian 'carrot-and-stick' approach in war-time Lebanese politics. It was also the beginning of Syria's attempts to neutralise, at least politically, its two main Arab rivals: Iraq and the PLO.

The National Dialogue Committee was the most convenient instrument to defuse tension in the second half of 1975. With political and military stalemate, dialogue was not expected to narrow differences among the protagonists. Nor could dialogue end war. Leaders reiterated their well-known positions and there was no instrument of pressure to force them into a position of compromise. Apart from the exchange of accusations by the participants, the National Dialogue Committee's contribution was to inspire cartoonists to make up jokes and satirical anecdotes about the participants' national deaf talk'.

Another attempt at dialogue was initiated by the religious establishment. With the failure of the political leadership to curb violence, it was now the turn of religious leaders to make their voices heard. But neither their voice nor that of Lebanon's sectarian gods was heard. Nonetheless, the 'spiritual summit', attended by thirteen clerics representing Lebanon's major sectarian groups, was a much needed gesture of goodwill. The meeting was held at the Maronite Patriarch's See in Bkirki. It was followed by another meeting held at the Sunni Dar al-Fatwa in 'Aramoun.⁵³

The 'spiritual summit' was the first in the history of Christian-Muslim relations in Lebanon to include the country's most influential religious leaders. The meeting was loaded with symbolism at a time of war and destruction. In a display of religious fraternity, Musa al-Sadr said his noon prayer in one of Bkirki's halls. But neither gestures of Lebanese unity nor repeated calls for peace were sufficient to halt the hysterical bloodletting which intensified as the meeting took place.

Operation Sérail, Ravaging Violence and Deadlock

In October 1975, violence spread to various parts of the country. In Beirut fighting spread to the hotel district

where heavy artillery was employed.⁵⁴ Attacks and counter-attacks by the warring factions left Beirut's major hotels in ruin. Fighting also continued in the suburbs, particularly in the industrial Mkalles area near the Tal-Za'tar camp, where many factories were burned down. Warfare also intensified along the Tripoli-Zgharta front-line, where the Lebanese army came under attack causing the death of four, including one officer, and the injury of twenty-seven others.⁵⁵ Several cease-fires were announced. None was implemented.

The frightening aspect of the war was the random kidnapping of civilians which, by October 1975, had reached new heights. Hundreds of people were kidnapped on the basis of their sectarian identity by armed factions or individuals who sought to exchange detainees with those held by other groups. In the process, hundreds of people were executed while others disappeared leaving no trace. Kidnapping, however, was not always a tragic episode. The kidnapping of Kamal Jumblatt's son Walid on 18 September 1975, and his detention for a few hours, was an occasion for Kamal Jumblatt and Camille Chamoun to establish brief contact.

On 4 October, four armed Fateh men stormed the main building of Beirut International Airport. They fired randomly inside the building in an attempt to force their way to the runway where an Egyptian airliner was about to depart for Cairo.⁵⁶ The shooting resulted in the death of one army soldier, one Palestinian, and the injury of seventeen others, including ten passengers.⁵⁷ The guerrillas were captured by Lebanese army soldiers. They revealed that their intention was to hijack the Egyptian aircraft to force Cairo to abrogate the Sinai II agreement.⁵⁸

With no political solution in sight, the deteriorating security situation was of primary concern. On 28 October, Karame announced the formation of a

‘security committee’ to deal with the breakdown of law and order. He also decided to stage a sit-in at the Sérail. But ‘operation Sérail’⁵⁹ helped little to stop the fierce fighting that was taking place only a few miles away from Karame’s office in Qantari and in the hotel district.

Karame, who was joined by Minister Ghassan Tuéni, was not mounting a rescue operation, but making a political statement. By then, the cabinet was factionalised and rendered inoperative and the army was neutralised. In addition, relations between Karame and Frangiyeh reached their lowest point since the formation of the cabinet. Karame considered resigning, or alternatively asking Frangiyeh to resign.⁶⁰ Instead, he issued a statement calling on all parties to bring an end to warfare. Karame’s position earned him the support of Jumblatt and other Muslim leaders. Jumblatt paid a visit to Karame and Tuéni in the Sérail and was critical of Karame’s defensive action (*i’tikaf*). According to Tuéni, Jumblatt told Karame that, were it not for Karame’s attempt to find a political settlement, Leftist forces would have overrun Christian forces and entered the city of Jounieh.⁶¹

Another institution of government, the Chamber of Deputies, which traditionally played a supportive role to the more powerful executive, was totally absent in the war. Several attempts to convene the deputies failed. On 28 October, as the first convoy of deputies arrived at the parliament building and preparations were underway to hold a parliamentary session, three gunmen drove by shouting obscenities through loudspeakers and shooting randomly.⁶² The shooting resulted in the deaths of Pierre Gemayel’s bodyguard, a Palestinian gunman, and the injury of the two other Palestinian gunmen and a Lebanese policeman.⁶³ Speaker Kamel al-Ass’ad described the incident as an attempt to ‘assassinate’ parliament’s role as a national representative body.⁶⁴ A few months later the parliament building, located in the old commercial district of Beirut, was burned down and looted.

Emboldened by the support of another Muslim ‘summit’ meeting, attended this time by Arafat, Karame staged a show of force over yet another controversial matter: an arms shipment received by the Christian militias. The Lebanese military authorities failed to stop it, despite government orders. Although militia leaders claimed that the ship did not carry weapons, it was obvious that it did. This was confirmed by eye-

witnesses who saw the unloading of weapons at the Aquamarina beach resort near the city of Jounieh.⁶⁵ The absurdity of the affair was that Karame and other Muslim leaders sought to capitalise on the issue at a time when the entire country had become an arsenal. Ironically, condemnation by Muslim leaders came immediately after they held a meeting attended by Arafat and Abu Iyad. In response to Muslim accusations, Chamoun and Gemayel called for the strict application of the law and the banning of armed activities not just in selective areas but throughout Lebanese territory.⁶⁶

Notwithstanding the escalation of warfare and the political deadlock, an interesting development took place towards the end of October: secret talks between Palestinian and Christian leaders. Arranged by Lebanese Army intelligence chief Colonel Jules Boustany, two consecutive meetings were held in Kaslik on October 23 and 25, 1975 between Hani al-Hassan and Abu al-Za'im, representing Arafat, and several Christian politicians and intellectuals.⁶⁷ In addition to the two Maronite priests Boulos Azzi and Boulos Na'man, who had held contacts with Fateh leaders four months earlier, the meeting was attended by Ibrahim Najjar, representing the Kataeb Party, Chaker Abou Sleiman, head of the Maronite League, Sa'id Boustany, a Maronite intellectual involved with the Kaslik research group, and Jesuit priest 'Abdallah Dagher. Frangiyeh as well as Chamoun, Gemayel and other Christian leaders were informed about the talks.

The two-day talks resulted in a draft 'Lebanese-Palestinian Pact' which consisted of the following points: (i) cessation of hostilities; (ii) resolution of conflict through dialogue; (3) the PLO's implementation of all the agreements signed with the Lebanese government; (iv) an end to media campaigns by all parties, and (v) the formation of a follow-up committee.⁶⁸ It was also agreed that the Pact would be signed by Arafat and Christian leaders at the Maronite Patriarch See in Bkirki in the presence of the papal nuncio and read at the presidential palace in Ba'abda.⁶⁹

Agreement, however, was only on paper. The two Palestinian officials left and no contacts were resumed. A few days later, inquiring about the Palestinian response, Na'man was informed by Walid Khalidi that Kamal Jumblatt opposed the agreement.⁷⁰ While it is difficult to see how such an agreement would have ended conflict at a time when several groups with

conflicting interests were involved, it was nonetheless an attempt to secure a truce, if ending the war was not possible. And if Palestinian-Maronite talks were intended at that time to neutralise Syria's increasing influence, they could not be sustained without Syria's backing.

Taqsim versus Tawtin By October, talk about conspiracies and external plots was a refrain shared by all those who had a hand in creating turmoil in Lebanon. Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian and other Arab leaders saw 'hidden forces' seeking to escalate the war.⁷¹ Two issues dominated the political discourse: 'partition (*taqsim*) originating in Palestinian circles, and the permanent settlement of the Palestinians (*tawtin*) originating in Maronite circles. Although denounced by both Maronite and Palestinian leaders,⁷² these scenarios were on the minds of both parties, at least as 'contingency plans', if not as plans for immediate action.

The unfolding consequences of Sinai II helped reinforce a conviction shared by Palestinians that they were alone when it came to making deals with Israel. This strengthened the belief in the notion of *tawtin*. The more excluded they were from regional peace plans the greater their entrenchment in Lebanon. A de facto settlement, or *tawtin* by design, in the absence of an overall resolution to the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, made the Palestinian presence in Lebanon seem permanent.

As for the notion of *taqsim*, it was not presented as a proposal by any leader or party. But for some Maronite leaders it was a 'last resort' alternative in the event of a Palestinian-controlled Lebanon. Obviously, there were formidable obstacles standing in the way of partition. In addition to Lebanese opposition to partition, including that of influential Maronite

leaders, notably Raymond Eddé, Syria and the PLO were categorically opposed to the partitioning of 'Arab Lebanon'. On 19 December 1975, Abu Iyad declared in Kuwait that 'the PLO would not allow the partition in Lebanon'.⁷³ A few months earlier, Khaddam stated in an interview to a Kuwaiti daily that 'Lebanon was part of Syria and it will be claimed back in the event of any attempt to partition the country, and this would include the Mountain and the four provinces.'⁷⁴

In November 1975, it was the turn of non-Arab envoys to attempt reconciliation in Lebanon. On 9 November, Vatican envoy Cardinal Paolo Bertoli arrived in Beirut and held a series of meetings with Christian and Muslim leaders.⁷⁵ A few days later, French presidential envoys, former prime minister Maurice Couve de Murville and former cabinet minister Georges Gorse, arrived in Beirut and followed the same ritual of visits and talks.⁷⁶ Nothing of substance came from these two initiatives. By then neither the Vatican nor France, nor any other Western party was capable of influencing the course of events, let alone bringing peace to the country.

By the end of 1975, anarchy prevailed throughout the country and the positions of the protagonists were well-known.⁷⁷ By and large, no two groups were at odds on all points, nor did they have more than one or two points in common. The truth of the matter was that no one was really listening to what the other was saying. Distrust and confusion were rife. All parties played a game over which they had little control, and the rules of which continued to change with every shift in regional power politics.

Notes

- 1 *Al-Nahar*, 2 July 1975.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 6 July 1975.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 For details on the kidnapping, see Mattar, *Suqut...*, pp. 89–92 and Khuwairi, *Hawadith Lubnan...*, pp. 116–19. On the organisation, see Fadl Shruru, *Al-Ahzaab wa al-Qiwa alSiyasiyyafi Lubnan 1930–1980* (Beirut: Dar al Masira, 1981): 357–8.
- 5 Two Israeli raids targeted the south. *Al-Nahar*, 8 August 1975.
- 6 *Al-Safir*, 19 August 1975.
- 7 Al-Quwatli's article was reprinted in local partisan publications in Christian areas and was distributed widely.
- 8 See Farid el Khazen, *The Communal Pact...*, pp. 6–17.
- 9 See Ismail, *The Arab Lefty* pp. 92–125.
- 10 See Farid el Khazen, 'Kamal Jumblatt: The Uncrowned Druze Prince of the Left', *Middle Eastern Studies* 24 (April 1988): 199–201.
- 11 Deeb, *The Lebanese Civil War*, p. 62.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 64–70.
- 13 For a survey of political parties in Lebanon until the mid-1960s, see Suleiman, *Political Parties...*. On the period since the late 1960s, see Picard, 'L'évolution...', pp. 74–6; Jacques Couland, 'Le Parti Communiste Libanais. Cinquante ans après', *Maghreb Machrek*, 68 (April–June 1975): 61–75; George Hawi, 'On the Upgrade. 'Third Congress of the Lebanese Communist Party', *World Marxist Review*, 15 (March 1975): 71–9.
- 14 *Al-Barnamij al-Marhali Lilharaka al-Wataniyya* (Beirut: Manshurat Maktab al-I'lam fi al-Haraka al-Wataniyya, 1977).
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 18 Interview with Mohsin Ibrahim, 6 March 1997.
- 19 See Kassir, *La Guerre du Liban...*, pp. 120–4.
- 20 See Sharara, *Hurub al-Istitba'* ..., pp. 110–44.
- 21 *Al-Nahar*, 24 August 1975.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 29 August and 2 September 1975.
- 23 Salibi, *Crossroads...*, pp. 122–3.
- 24 For details, see Khuwairi, *Hawadith Lubnan...*, pp. 159–77.
- 25 *Al-Nahar*, 5 September 1975.
- 26 See Khuwairi, *Hawadith Lubnan...*, pp. 164–5.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 166.
- 28 *Al-Nahar*, 8 September 1975.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 9 September 1975.
- 30 Khuwairi, *Hawadith Lubnan...*, p. 173.

- 31 *Al-Nahar*, 11 September 1975.
- 32 Ibid., 12 September 1975. See also Khuwairi, *Hawadith Lubnan...*, pp. 181–2.
- 33 *Al-Nahar*, 9 September 1975.
- 34 See Mattar, *Suqut...*, pp. 108–11.
- 35 Ibid., pp. 114–16.
- 36 *Al-Nahar*, 16 September 1975.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 See Asad's speech in *al-Nahar*, 21 July 1976.
- 39 Interview with Ghassan Tuéni who was then a member of the Karame cabinet, 6 February 1997.
- 40 Yezid Sayigh, 'The Palestinians', in Lawrence Freedman (ed.) *Strategic Coercion*. Forthcoming, Oxford University Press, p. 27.
- 41 Interview with Ghassan Tuéni, 6 February 1997.
- 42 *Al-Nahar*, 20 September 1975.
- 43 Mattar, *Suqut...*, p. 111.
- 44 *Al-Nahar*, 23 September 1975.
- 45 Ibid., 26 September 1975.
- 46 For details on the National Dialogue Committee, see Chamussy, *Chronique...*, pp. 111–14; Deeb, *The Lebanese Civil War*, pp. 78–81; Mattar, *Suqut...*, pp. 127–37; *al-Nahar*, 25 September 1975. The Committee's members were: Camille Chamoun, Pierre Gemayel, Raymond Eddé, René Moawad (Maronites), Rashid Karame, Sa'eb Salam, 'Abdallah alYafi, Najib Karanouh (Sunni), Kamel al-Ass'ad, 'Assem Qanso, Rida Wahid, Hassan 'Awada (Shia), Ghassan Tuéni, Elias Saba, 'Abbas Khalaf (Greek Orthodox), Kamal Jumblatt, Majid Arslan (Druze), Philippe Taqla (Greek Catholic), Khatchig Babikian (Armenian), Edmond Rabbath (Syrian Catholic representing Christian minorities). According to Ghassan Tuéni, Damascus sought to weaken Christian representation of the Lebanese Front in the National Dialogue Committee, which was represented only by Chamoun and Gemayel. Interview with Ghassan Tuéni, 6 February 1997.
- 47 See the proceedings of the National Dialogue Committee in *Al-Tariq* No. 1–8 (January–August 1976): 97–320.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 *Al-Nahar*, 11 October 1975.
- 50 Mattar, *Suqut...*, p. 136. 'Assem Qanso participated in the committee not only as representative of the Lebanese branch of the pro-Syrian Ba'th party, but also as representative of the Shia community since the members of the committee were selected on a sectarian basis.
- 51 Interview with Ghassan Tuéni, 6 February 1997. According to Tuéni, minister Adel Osseiran did not join the National Dialogue Committee because he was boycotted by Khaddam.
- 52 *Al-Nahar*, 25 September 1975.
- 53 For details, see *al-Nahar*, 5 October 1975.
- 54 *Al-Nahar*, 9, 26, 27, 29, October 1975. See also Kassir, *La Guerre du Liban...*, pp. 129–34 and pp. 144–54.
- 55 Ibid., 9 October 1975.
- 56 Ibid., 5 October 1975.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Ibid., Mattar, *Suqut...*, p. 143.

- 59 Chamussy, *Chronique...*, pp. 108–10; *al-Nahar*, 29 October 1975.
- 60 Interview with Ghassan Tuéni, 6 February 1997.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 *Al-Nahar*, 29 October 1975.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid., 7 November 1975.
- 66 Ibid., 8 November 1975.
- 67 Interview with Father Boulos Na'man, 23 September 1997.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 See, for example, statements made by Egyptian president Anwar Sadat in *al-Nahar*, 7 and 19 October 1975.
- 72 See *al-Nahar*, 15 October 1975.
- 73 Ibid., 20 December 1975. See also *al-Kitab al-Sanawi Lilqadiyya al-Filastiniyya*, 1976 (1979): 144–5.
- 74 Ibid., 8 January 1975.
- 75 See Chamussy, *Chronique...*, pp. 114–19.
- 76 See Maurice Couve de Murville, 'La Crise Libanaise et l'Evolution du Proche-Orient', *Politique Etrangère*, No. 2 (1976): 89–104.
- 77 For the principal declarations and memoranda issued by various political parties, leaders and communal bodies, see *CEMAM Reports*, 1975, vol. 3, 1976, pp. 1–116

24

The Changing War

The Constitutional Document and its Aftermath

The second Egyptian–Israeli military disengagement brought about a hasty reshuffling of ‘frontlines’ in Lebanon. By then, conflicts involving Lebanese groups were overshadowed by a more damaging confrontation between Syria and the PLO.

As Damascus began to explore new alternatives in Lebanon, the war underwent yet another mutation. One concrete manifestation of this change was Pierre Gemayel’s talks with Asad in Damascus on 6 December 1975. For the PLO and the Left claiming monopoly on Arabism, an official visit to Damascus by the head of a party, against which a campaign was launched only a few months earlier to isolate it from Lebanese and Arab politics, was cause for concern.

Kataeb-Syrian Rapprochement Gemayel’s visit to Damascus came following Kataeb–Syrian talks which began a few weeks after the decision to isolate the Kataeb.¹ The talks between Gemayel and Asad were constructive. Asad outlined three objectives: (i) the

Kataeb Party should not be involved in schemes to partition the country; (ii) Lebanon's constitutional authorities should be supported; (iii) military confrontations should be contained.² In practice, the quid pro quo was that Damascus would work towards finding a settlement with the PLO on the basis of the 1969 Cairo Agreement, and Christian leaders would agree to introduce reforms in the political system.³

The murder of four Kataeb militiamen, while driving on an internal road in the locality of Fanar, the night before Gemayel was scheduled to visit Damascus, was no mere coincidence. While the identity of the assassins was not known, the timing of the killings was aimed at instigating sectarian turmoil and at provoking an overreaction on the part of the Kataeb militiamen. This in turn would pre-empt whatever positive outcome might emerge from the Gemayel-Asad talks.

Upon learning the news of the killing of the four elite commando militiamen and the injury of a fifth, several armed Kataeb members instantly took to the streets of East Beirut and unleashed their anger against innocent passers-by.⁴ This hysterical killing, which came to be known as 'Black Saturday', went on for several hours and resulted in the deaths of more than a hundred innocent people.⁵ The victims of this random outburst were mostly Muslim workers at the Beirut port, located near the Kataeb Party headquarters. This brutal incident took place as Gemayel was about to meet with Syrian leaders in Damascus.

Gemayel's visit, in reality, was not as unexpected as it appeared. It marked the culmination of several years of rapprochement between the Kataeb Party and the pro-Syrian Ba'th Party. Beginning in 1972, two years after Asad took over in Syria, high level contacts were established between Kataeb and Ba'thist officials.⁶ They were preceded by earlier contacts made between Karim Pakradouni, representing the Kataeb, and 'Assim Qanso, head of the pro-Syrian Ba'th Party in Lebanon. With the approval of the leadership of both parties, a committee was formed to discuss issues of mutual concern

dealing with Lebanese and Arab politics, notably the Palestinian problem.⁷ These talks, which were then known to only a few people in both Parties, continued for several months.

Meetings between party officials continued in 1973. Ba'thist officials were critical of the conduct of PLO guerrillas in Lebanon and thought they should be curtailed. In September 1973, a Kataeb delegation, headed by Gemayel, visited Syria and met with Asad.⁸ The talks centred on Palestinian–Lebanese relations. Asad explained that the Palestinian cause did not concern only the PLO, but all Arabs. He then stressed that Syria was seeking to narrow differences between the Lebanese government and the PLO and to encourage co-ordination between the two sides within the framework of the Cairo Agreement.

Kataeb-Syrian relations continued to improve, particularly after the 1973 Arab–Israeli war. A Kataeb delegation visited the city of Qunaitra captured by Syria in the war. Ba'th Party delegations attended the opening sessions of two Kataeb conventions held in 1973 and 1974. In the aftermath of the 1973 war, Damascus began to diversify its interests in Lebanon. The shift was reflected in the content of the issues discussed between Kataeb and Ba'thist officials. In 1974, Zuheir Mohsin, the leader of the Syrian-sponsored Sa'iqa, established contacts with Kataeb officials.⁹

While it was not until a few months later that Kataeb–Syrian co-operation took on a concrete form, Gemayel's visit to Damascus in December 1975 sent alarming signals to Jumblatt and the Palestinian leadership. Seeking to find a counterweight to Syria's changing political course, Fateh initiated a political campaign in several Arab countries. One such campaign was Abu Iyad's highly publicised visit to Kuwait.¹⁰ Similarly, Jumblatt sought Arab support and visited several Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia.¹¹ These efforts were aimed at bolstering the image of the Left and at enlisting Arab political and military support for the PLO and Leftist forces.

Military Escalation In January 1976, military operations targeted civilian areas and had well-defined objectives. The assault by Christian militias on 19 January 1976 on the area of Karantina, situated

in a strategic location at the principal northern entrance of East Beirut, was preceded a few days earlier by the take-over of a small Palestinian camp in Dbayeh near the city of Jounieh. Moreover, military confrontations took place between Kataeb and Leftist forces near Antelias (Haret al-Ghawarneh) north of Beirut. Leftist militiamen and their supporters were forced out of the area. Following these attacks, calls by Muslim leaders, notably Mufti Hassan Khalid, were made for Syria to intervene to defend Palestinian and Muslim forces.¹²

Following the capture of Karantina and the expulsion of its inhabitants, Jumblatt went to Damascus to confer with Syrian leaders.¹³ He met with Asad in the presence of Khaddam and Jamil and demanded that Syria should intervene to end the conflict.¹⁴ To this Asad replied that a political settlement should be worked out.¹⁵ This essentially meant that Damascus ruled out military solutions imposed by any of the protagonists, at least at that stage of the war.

A few days after Jumblatt's visit to Damascus, PLO and Leftist forces attacked the Maronite town of Damour. While the attack on Damour on 20 January earned Syria's support, the Syrian-PLO/Jumblatti alliance was short-lived. As the military balance tilted in favour of Palestinian and Leftist forces, Jumblatt opted for military escalation.¹⁶ The attack on Damour and two nearby Christian towns, Jiyeh and Sa'diyat, where Camille Chamoun resided, resulted in a large number of casualties and led to the expulsion of the entire population of Damour and nearby towns. PLO forces, notably Fateh and Sa'iqa played an instrumental role in the attack:¹⁷ Prior to the take-over of Damour, DFLP leader Nayif Hawatmeh suggested another target: the Maronite town of Deir al-Qamar in the Shouf, Chamoun's hometown.¹⁸ For the PLO and its allies, the attack on Damour had a dual

target. It was the first major military setback for the Christian forces; it also cleared the major coastal road linking Beirut to the south, the PLO's 'hinterland', from enemy forces.

In January 1976, major Christian towns in the Beqa, Zahleh and Deir al-Ahmar, were attacked by PLO and Syrian-backed forces. Syria's role in the fighting tipped the military balance in favour of the PLO by allowing the entry of two Syrian based brigades (Qadisiyya and Hittin) along with the Egyptian-based 'Ayn Jalout brigade' into Lebanon.¹⁹ In February 1976, PLO forces numbered 30,650: 11,200 regular fighters and 19,450 members of the militia forces, as shown in Table 24.1. The largest number of fighters and heavy weapons were in al-Rashidiyeh, 'Ayn alHelweh, Sabra and Shatila and Tal-Za'tar camps.

Table 24.1 Number of Armed Men and Weapons in Palestinian Camps (1/2/1976)

	Armed Fighters	Men Militia	Artillery	Can. 106	V Can. 75	Mortar 120	Mortar 81	Mortar 60	RPG	Anticraft	Mch. Gun 599	Mch. Gun Doshka	Mch. Gun Krinov	SAM
Sabra & Shatila	1200	2300	5	6	12	12	18	12	75	18	45	35	50	35
Borj al-Barajneh	500	1000	2	3	4	5	8	8	35	7	12	11	13	15
Tal Za'tar	1000	3000	-	3	4	7	8	10	50	6	10	12	15	15
Jisr al Basha	100	200	-	-	1	1	3	3	15	1	5	3	6	3
Mar Elias	50	100	-	-	-	-	2	3	10	-	2	2	3	-
Al Barid	800	1200	2	3	4	6	8	8	45	7	8	10	12	15
Al Baddawi	400	600	-	2	3	5	8	8	30	5	7	7	10	10
Ayn al-Helweh	2000	3500	2	5	5	10	14	10	50	10	15	15	20	25
Miyeh wa Miyeh	200	300	-	2	3	3	4	4	15	4	6	5	10	10
Qasmiyeh & Burghuliyeh	200	300	-	-	2	-	3	3	15	2	3	3	5	5
Shebriha & Maashouq	100	200	-	-	1	-	2	2	10	1	4	4	5	5
Al-Buss	200	300	-	2	2	2	5	5	20	3	5	8	10	8
Al-Rashidiyeh Al-Borj	3000	4500	4	5	5	8	10	10	50	18	12	12	25	30
Al-Shemaly	900	1100	4	5	5	6	10	15	50	25	10	12	25	25
Nabatiyeh	150	250	-	2	2	2	4	4	25	74	7	5	10	10
Wavell	400	600	-	2	3	-	3	3	20	2	5	5	10	5
TOTAL	11200	19450	19*	40	56	67	110	108	515	113	156	149	229	216

* 5: 122MM. Other heavy weapons: Not Specified *Source:* Lebanese Army Intelligence Reports Damascus was using a 'carrot-and-stick' approach with the Maronite leadership. Syrian support for Palestinian, Leftist and Muslim forces was intended to keep the Maronite leadership in check. The fall of Damour and nearby Sa'diyat was a blow to Chamoun, the reluctant Maronite supporter of Syria's role in Lebanon. Similarly, stepping up the offensive against Zgharta, Frangiyeh's hometown, was intended to put pressure on the president. Indeed, as military confrontations took place along the Tripoli-Zgharta front-line, a Syrian delegation was meeting with Frangiyeh at the presidential palace

in Ba'abda.²⁰ While Asad sought to tame the Maronite establishment, his objective, in early 1976, was not to defeat Christian forces militarily. Syria sought to preserve a precarious military balance between the protagonists, which it could manipulate and draw political advantage from. This tactic came to fruition in the making of the Constitutional Document.

Meanwhile, on 31 January, Maronite leaders joined ranks and formed an alliance called the 'Front for Liberty and Man'. The Front, which included leading political and intellectual figures (later known as the Lebanese Front), helped improve military co-ordination between the two largest Christian militias of the Kataeb and National Liberal Parties led by Bashir Gemayel and Dany Chamoun respectively.²¹

The Stillborn Constitutional Document It was during the phase of the war when Syria was in a position to shape the course of events both politically and militarily, that the Constitutional Document was announced by Frangiyeh on 14 February 1976. The announcement came upon the return of Frangiyeh from an official visit to Damascus accompanied by Premier Karame. For Damascus, there was a need to end the internal Lebanese dimension of the war and thus gain greater manoeuvrability in dealing with regional politics. While it could be said that the 'cold war' between Damascus and Arafat began by the end of 1975, it was not until after the announcement of the Constitutional Document that Damascus shifted its policy more openly against the PLO and its Lebanese allies.²²

The idea for a negotiated political settlement to end conflict through Syrian good offices had been on the mind of the Syrian leadership since November

1975. To pursue that course of action, Damascus called upon an associate of Frangiyeh, Lucien Dahdah, then the Chairman of the Board of the Intra Company.²³ Dahdah, who had family ties with Frangiyeh and old acquaintances in Syria,²⁴ was contacted in Paris, where he was staying. With Frangiyeh's approval, Dahdah met with Syrian officials.²⁵

Talks went on for about four weeks and resulted in a draft, which was the basis for the Constitutional Document.²⁶ Dahdah held meetings with Syrian officials, including seven with Asad.²⁷ When negotiations started relations between Asad and Frangiyeh had been strained for several months, following Syrian army intervention in the war. Frangiyeh had presented evidence to Damascus confirming Syrian troops' involvement in the war, particularly in the north.²⁸

Notwithstanding the deteriorating relations between the two men, both kept the door open for possible dialogue. This came following the approval of the draft proposal that was being negotiated between Dahdah and Syrian officials. On 22 December 1975, Asad had a telephone conversation with Frangiyeh and expressed an interest in pursuing efforts to find a political settlement.²⁹ Meanwhile, Dahdah informed Karame of the content of the proposal. In the draft proposal, the presidency of the republic would be given to a Maronite while the posts of premier and speaker would be open to Muslim communities without specifying a particular sect.³⁰

It was not until one month later, during which heavy fighting took place on several fronts, that high level talks were resumed. In early February 1976, Frangiyeh and Karame went to Damascus to put the finishing touches on the agreement. Christian and Muslim leaders were informed about the broad lines of the proposed settlement. Chamoun and other Christian leaders were supportive while Gemayel had some reservations.³¹ Khaddam informed Muslim leaders about the broad lines of the proposed agreement.

In Damascus, Frangiyeh held two meetings with Asad. In these meetings the text of the Constitutional Document was finalised. Karame, who attended one meeting, objected to the opening up of the posts of premier and speaker and favoured the formula already in application, which reserved the premiership to a Sunni and the speakership to a Shia.³² The latter formula was finally adopted in the final official text. The idea behind the opening up

of the two posts was intended to satisfy Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt. However, this did not materialise.

The Constitutional Document marked the crowning of Syria's political achievement since the beginning of the war. In early 1976, Syria was the only external party capable of striking an agreement between the warring factions. Damascus had ties with the Maronite leadership, notably with Frangiyeh and Gemayel, and was in a position to influence the Sunni and Shia political and religious establishments. Syria's role was not confined to the internal dimension of conflict but also to its Palestinian dimension. In the official communiqué issued following the end of the Asad-Frangiyeh talks, Syria guaranteed the proper implementation of the Cairo Agreement.³³

Syria's agenda in Lebanon went beyond Lebanon's internal scene. Its main concern in early 1976 centred on the PLO's growing military power. Following the signing of the Constitutional Document two Syrian-controlled PLA battalions entered Lebanon while Sa'iqa leader Zuheir Mohsin criticised Fateh's position towards Syria.³⁴ In Syria's calculations, to end the war was to prevent the 'Arabisation' of conflict, as demanded by Arafat and Jumblatt. More importantly, Syria would have political access to Lebanon's political scene, not as a party to the conflict, but as a mediator seeking to bring peace to the country at the request of the Lebanese government.

The PLO, for its part, saw in Syria's increasing influence in Lebanon a threat to its ability to pursue a course of action free from 'syrian tutelage'.³⁵ The Syrian pledge after the signing of the Constitutional Document to implement the Cairo Agreement was viewed by PLO leaders as a move to constrain its military and political action. To counter these developments, the PLO began formal high-level talks with Egypt towards the end of February, thus aggravating its relations with Syria.³⁶

The Constitutional Document was a convenient balancing act. It stipulated a more balanced confessional representation in government office and provided a middle ground formula to contain the internal dimension of conflict.³⁷ It addressed Muslim grievances though without undermining the confessional foundations of the political system. One such grievance was Lebanon's Arabism. The Constitutional Document proclaimed Lebanon's Arabism but stated that Lebanon is a sovereign, free and independent country.³⁸ But proclaiming Lebanon's Arabism in 1976 helped little to end the conflict. By then the stamp of approval for Arabism was a function of the

power struggle between various Arab regimes and, specifically in Lebanon, between Syria and the PLO.

Of the seventeen points stated in the Constitutional Document, five dealt with Muslim grievances. By and large, they were aimed at curtailing presidential power. They are as follows: (i) Seats in parliament would be distributed on a fifty-fifty basis between Muslims and Christians, and proportionately within each sect; (ii) the prime minister would be elected by a 51 per cent majority of the Chamber of Deputies; then the prime minister should hold parliamentary consultations and draw up the list of ministers in agreement with the president; (iii) All decrees and draft laws should be signed by the president and the prime minister. This did not apply to the decrees appointing the prime minister, accepting his resignation, or dismissing his government. The prime minister should enjoy all the powers customarily exercised by him; (iv) The distribution of posts on a confessional basis should be abolished, although the principle of confessional equality should be maintained at the level of senior posts; (v) The naturalisation laws should be amended.

By contrast, only one provision addressed Christian demands. It affirmed the existing distribution of the three presidential posts, which allocated the presidency of the republic to a Maronite, the presidency of the Chamber of Deputies to a Shia, and the premiership to a Sunni. The other provisions of the Constitutional Document consisted of broad issues of political and administrative reforms over which there was no fundamental disagreement. They included the formation of a Supreme Constitutional Court, the formation of a Supreme Council for Planning and Development, the adoption of a decentralised administration, the expansion of the public educational system and the implementation of social justice.

Publicly Christian and Muslim leaders supported the Constitutional Document, but privately positions were different. For Frangiyeh, Chamoun and Gemayel, the Constitutional Document was acceptable, but it was the upper ceiling of 'concessions' they were prepared to make. For Muslim leaders, the Constitutional Document had 'negative and positive points', as stated by Mufti Khalid. Although the Sunni community stood to benefit most from the provisions that redressed the balance in confessional representation, Sunni leaders saw the Constitutional Document as a temporary arrangement which needed to be further developed.³⁹

Muslim dissatisfaction with the Constitutional Document was best revealed in the verbatim accounts of the meetings held at the Mufti residence in 'Aramoun. Leading political and religious figures from all three communities, Sunni, Shia and Druze, took part in these meetings. Some of these meetings were attended by Syrian officials, Abdul-Halim Khaddam and Naji Jamil, and by Arafat and Libyan Premier Abdul-Salam Jalloud.⁴⁰ Mufti Khalid was the most vocal critic of the Constitutional Document. For him and for other Sunni leaders, notably Sa'eb Salam and 'Abdallah al-Yafi, the Document fell short of meeting Muslim demands. The Syrian initiative, Khalid explained, was accepted against our will (*mukrahin*), for 'it gave us temporary victory'.⁴¹ Therefore, more should be done to achieve other objectives.⁴²

Of the three Sunni leaders, Salam, Yafi and Karame, the latter was the least critical of the Constitutional Document. Karame saw that the Constitutional Document enhanced the powers of the prime minister. For him there was no harm in giving 'Arab Lebanon a Christian symbol', that is, by giving the presidency of the republic to a Maronite.⁴³ Yafi and Salam were, for their part, less willing to accept the changes introduced in the Constitutional Document. According to Yafi, Muslims had made a 'sacrifice' by accepting that the presidency would be reserved to a Maronite.⁴⁴ Both Yafi and Salam insisted that the allocation of the post of the presidency to a Maronite should not be stated in writing and should not appear in any constitutional text.⁴⁵ Short of a better deal, the Constitutional Document was accepted *faute de mieux* ('*ala madad*'), for it preserved significant presidential powers.⁴⁶

If Sunni Muslim leaders were little satisfied with the Constitutional Document despite the fact that they were the major beneficiaries of the restructuring of power, what then could be said of other leaders, particularly Kamal Jumblatt, who was the most vocal critic of the political system? Publicly Jumblatt accepted only five articles of the Constitutional Document.⁴⁷ He was at odds with Muslim leaders over the issue of secularism.⁴⁸ Even within the LNM there were those who favoured a flexible approach towards the Constitutional Document. This meant building on its positive aspects.⁴⁹ But Jumblatt was adamant about his position. The advice given by Libyan premier Jalloud to Jumblatt to surpass the issue of secularism by adopting an 'Islamic national philosophy',⁵⁰ as practised in

Libya, was not helpful to bridge the gap which separated the Muslim and Leftist camps.

Jumblatt saw in the Constitutional Document a re-enactment of the 'no victor no vanquished' formula, something which he was not willing to accept.⁵¹ For him, the Constitutional Document was deficient because it did not adopt the LNM's programme for reform announced on 18 August 1975, which called, among other things, for the abolition of political confessionalism. Compromise was not appealing to Jumblatt at a time when the military balance in February 1976 was in favour of PLO-Leftist forces.

While other leaders were willing to preserve confessional representation, though they disagreed on the nature of the distribution of power within the executive, Jumblatt sought to open up the confessional structure of government. His upper ceiling was the abolition of the confessional system. The lower ceiling, however, was to have representation in the three top posts (presidency, premiership, speakership) open to confessional groups (Christian and Muslim) but without allocating seats to specific sects, as stated in the Constitutional Document.⁵²

Unlike the Sunni leadership, which targeted the rules of the political game, namely, the powers of the president, Jumblatt targeted the political game itself. As a Druze, he did not have access to any of the three senior posts in government. In addition, Jumblatt's ability to play on inter-Christian and inter-Muslim differences would be constrained when these posts were allocated to specific sects rather than to two confessional groups. Jumblatt, in fact, was the sole dissenter when it came to the political reforms, as stated in the Constitutional Document.

Of all Lebanese politicians, Jumblatt's predicament was unique. As a Druze leader and the inheritor of a three-century-old power base, Jumblatt entered parliament for the first time at twenty-six and was cabinet minister at twenty-nine (he held several cabinet posts). As a leader of a small community rising to national prominence and great influence, Jumblatt could not have been any more powerful than he was during more than thirty years of political activism. But as a leader with great political ambitions, skills and popularity, Jumblatt's aspirations were blocked by the pre-set ceiling of confessional politics. To satisfy Jumblatt's ambition, the confessional system had to be abolished. But that was not possible either by force or by negotiation under the circumstances that prevailed in 1976.

Most opposed to Jumblatt was Damascus, whose interests in Lebanon in early 1976 were little served by a drastic restructuring of the political system. Damascus had as great a stake in the Constitutional Document as any other Lebanese party. Indeed, the Constitutional Document was, in a sense, Syria's 'peace initiative' in Lebanon. For Damascus, the Constitutional Document had a dual objective: to satisfy Muslim leaders and to strengthen ties with the Maronite leadership.

Jumblatt's opposition to the Constitutional Document deprived him of a much needed tactical alliance with the Sunni and Shia political and religious leaderships. Jumblatt's alliance with Arafat and the latter's influence in Sunni politics could not compensate for the widening rift between Jumblatt and Muslim leaders. This marked the end of the reluctant rapprochement between Jumblatt and the Muslim establishment, which had begun since Frangiyeh's abortive attempt to form a military cabinet in May 1975.

As relations between Damascus and the Kataeb Party improved, Jumblatt sought to explore a new alternative to undermine Syrian-Christian relations. This was the opening up to Bashir Gemayel, the younger son of the Kataeb leader. In early 1976 Bashir was influential as a military commander, but was not yet in a position to influence the party's political decisions. A secret meeting took place between Jumblatt, Arafat and Bashir Gemayel at the Kuwaiti Embassy in Beirut.⁵³ Jumblatt proposed co-operation with the Kataeb in return for a position by the Kataeb against Syria. Jumblatt suggested that he could agree with the Kataeb on a formula to reform the political system. Arafat, for his part, asserted that the PLO would not stand in the way of an agreement between the Lebanese. Bashir Gemayel was charged to convey the message to his father. No deal was forthcoming, as Pierre Gemayel rejected the proposal altogether.⁵⁴

Jumblatt's political manoeuvring would have been of little significance were it not for Palestinian backing. The mutual interests that drew Jumblatt and Arafat together enhanced Jumblatt's power, particularly when the divide between Jumblatt and Damascus continued to widen. For Arafat, Jumblatt's inflexible position in early 1976 was not yet detrimental to PLO interests. The situation seemed salvageable, at least for the time being.

The Disintegration of the Lebanese Army Following the failure of the Constitutional Document, the war underwent qualitative change. Any military or political action to escalate conflict by the PLO and its Lebanese allies was, by its mere occurrence, viewed as directed against Syria. In fact, attempts were being made to neutralise Syria's increasing influence, which now had reached the Sunni leadership. To counter this, Arafat sought to promote Sunni and Leftist supporters of his own. One concrete manifestation of this policy was the announcement of the formation in early 1976 of the Beirut-based Sunni militia, al-Murabitun, led by Ibrahim Qoleilat.⁵⁵ A former Nasserite activist, Qoleilat was implicated in the assassination of the journalist Kamel Mrouweh in 1966 and was very much a local Beirut strong man (*qabaday*). Trained and armed by Fateh, al-Murabitun, which included Palestinian and Lebanese fighters, received Libyan money.⁵⁶

For Arafat, the formation of al-Murabitun met three objectives: (i) It gave Palestinian military operations in Beirut an internal Lebanese Muslim cover; (ii) It undermined the influence of the Sunni political leadership on the 'street', particularly in Beirut; (iii) It underlined Sunni opposition to Syrian policy in Lebanon. Being largely dependent on Fateh, al-Murabitun was a useful instrument of military operations used by Fateh for escalation of warfare in Beirut 1976.⁵⁷

Most alarming to Damascus in early 1976 was not political tactics and changing alliances, but military escalation. Rather than seeking a direct military confrontation with the Syrian regime, Fateh opted for another move aimed at undermining Syrian influence in Lebanon. This was the rebellion within the Lebanese Army, led by Sunni First Lieutenant Ahmad Khatib.⁵⁸ The main orchestrator of the rebellion was Fateh leader Abu Jihad.⁵⁹ Libya and Fateh provided financial support for the Khatib movement.⁶⁰

‘The Movement of Ahmad al-Khatib,’ later known as the Arab Army of Lebanon (AAL), was announced on 21 January 1976. The rebellion began in the Lebanese army barracks at Hasbayya, and quickly spread to other barracks in various parts of the country, especially in the south and the Beqa.⁶¹ For Syria, the rebellion was directed against its ‘stabilising role in Lebanon’.⁶²

As more officers and troops joined the Khatib movement, on 11 March another army officer, Brigadier 'Aziz al-Ahdab, staged a ‘television coup’ and demanded the resignation of President Frangiyeh. A Sunni from Tripoli, Ahdab was the military commander of the Beirut district. Ahdab’s troops numbered fewer than a hundred, and hardly controlled their command headquarters in Beirut.⁶³ Whether or not Ahdab had the tacit support of the army command to force the cabinet to resign and help reunite the army, he definitely went too far by demanding the resignation of Frangiyeh.⁶⁴ Although initially seeking to halt the breakdown, Ahdab’s action had the opposite effect. His ill-conceived move hastened the disintegration of the army and confirmed Syria’s suspicion of Palestinian involvement in this show of force.⁶⁵ Indeed, if Abu Jihad was the man behind Khatib, Abu Hassan Salameh, Arafat’s close associate, was behind Ahdab.⁶⁶ According to Abu Iyad, Ahdab was supplied by a Fateh escort to the television building where he announced the ‘coup’.⁶⁷ As explained by René Chamussy, Ahdab provoked a series of three contradictory reactions at popular, political and military levels, and ended up, against his wishes, triggering one of the ‘bloodiest cyclones’ of the war.⁶⁸

Two days later the army underwent yet another split. This time it was led by Colonel Antoine Barakat, who declared loyalty to Frangiyeh. A Maronite from Frangiyeh’s hometown Zgharta, Barakat controlled a major army barracks near the defence ministry. Another officer, Major Fouad Malik,

supported the Barakat led faction, as did Major Sa'd Haddad, who took over in Marja'youn in the south.⁶⁹

The Lebanese Army was ripped into sectarian pieces. Army officers and troops entered into combat alongside the warring factions, while others remained under the nominal command of Army Chief Hanna Sa'id. The latter commanded little authority even before the break-up of the army. Still others went home and did not take part in the fighting. Officers of the AAL led units in various parts of the country, particularly in the south and the north (Tripoli and 'Akkar), where two Sunni officers, Ahmad Butari and Ahmad Ma'mari, were in command. The AAL was involved in acts of kidnapping and sectarian killing in areas under its control in the north, south and the Beqa. The drama reached a high point, when on 25 March, the artillery of the AAL, led by Major Hussein 'Awwad, scored direct hits at Frangiyeh's residential quarters in the presidential palace forcing him to seek residency for the rest of his term in the relatively safe region of Kisirwan.⁷⁰

The three declared objectives of Khatib's rebellion were to underline Muslim discontent with 'Christian control' over the army, to defend Lebanon's Arabism and to defend the Palestinian Resistance.⁷¹ These demands would have made more political sense at an earlier stage of the war: by the time the rebellion had started, the claim that the Lebanese army was an instrument of Christian control was unconvincing. Attempts by Frangiyeh and by other Maronite leaders to have the army intervene had failed.

As for 'Lebanon's Arabism', Khatib's action came late. Lebanon's Arabism had been officially proclaimed a few weeks earlier in the Constitutional Document. That Lebanon's Arabism was an issue of internal dispute was one thing, but that it would require the disintegration of the Lebanese Army was another. How would, for instance, the shelling of the presidential palace facilitate the 'Arabisation of Lebanon? Also, what proper dosage of Arabism was needed – that is, more than what the Constitutional Document had to offer – to make Lebanon fully Arab? And whose brand of Arabism was more genuinely Arab, that of Asad or that of Arafat?

Regarding the objective of defending the Palestinian Resistance, the AAL stood on shaky ground; the party that needed least defence in 1976 was the PLO. In areas where the PLO was present, it had overwhelming military dominance. And when facing the enemy in areas controlled by the Christian

militias, the PLO had military superiority. Such an outdated argument augured well for soliciting military and financial support from Arab regimes, but fell on deaf ears in Syria.

As the war intensified, the AAL shrank from approximately 3,000–4,000 troops in March 1976 to a few hundred by the end of the year.⁷² Fateh leaders Abu Jihad and Abu Hassan Salameh were in control of the AAL, and were assisted by military commanders.⁷³ During the final phases of the 1975–1976 war, the AAL was completely marginalised, as was the role of Ahmad al-Khatib (a few weeks after the end of the war, Syrian authorities detained Khatib on 18 January 1977).

On the surface, the rebellion seemed spontaneous and reflected Muslim discontent within the army. In reality, however, the rebellion was orchestrated by Fateh and had well-defined objectives. For Fateh leaders, the Lebanese Army had always constituted a military threat to the PLO, not Lebanese militia forces. In early 1976, the situation seemed ripe for a large scale military action within the army. On that objective Palestinian leaders, notably Arafat, Abu Iyad, Abu Jihad, Abu Hassan Salameh, were in agreement.⁷⁴

Jumblatt, for his part, was initially unenthusiastic about the disintegration of the army.⁷⁵ Then Jumblatt gave the AAL support, but was critical of its actions mainly because Ahmad al-Khatib operated on his own and was beyond Jumblatt's control.⁷⁶

Fateh was the main beneficiary of the AAL. First, the one thing on which the PLO and the Left were in agreement was the discrediting and paralysis of the Lebanese Army. Second, while Fateh enjoyed Lebanese political cover represented by Muslim and Leftist support, the AAL gave Fateh military cover. Unlike the sponsorship of local militias, the AAL gave Fateh 'legitimate' sectarian cover: that of the 'Muslim' Lebanese army revolting against its 'Christian'-dominated command. The 'Lebanonisation' of the war was the best that AAL could offer the PLO in 1976. Third, Fateh drew a significant military advantage from the break-up of the Lebanese Army by adding to its arsenal heavy weapons captured from the army, particularly tanks and artillery.⁷⁷ Ironically, with the increasing control of Fateh officers over the AAL, Lebanese officers, who first joined the rebellion, clashed with Khatib and began to complain about Palestinian control over the AAL.⁷⁸

The other significant aspect of the Khatib rebellion concerned Syria. The rebellion was the latest manifestation of the yet undeclared war between Damascus and Arafat. In mid-March, 1976 Damascus took a series of measures against the PLO: the closure of the PLO military academy near Damascus, the imposition of a ban on the flow of combat supplies through Syrian ports, and the deployment of a PLO battalion near PLO headquarters in Beirut.⁷⁹ Sa'iqa guerrillas attacked the PLO representative in Lebanon, Shafiq al-Hout, and the offices of two pro-PLO newspapers.⁸⁰

Prior to the total disintegration of the army, Damascus sought to have Ahmad al-Khatib join a pro-Syrian Lebanese Army faction known as the 'Vanguard of the Arab Army of Lebanon'. This faction was based in the Beqa and was led by Major Ibrahim Shahin. The attempt did not materialise. For Damascus, staging a rebellion only a few days after Damascus succeeded in brokering the Constitutional Document, was an unacceptable act of defiance. That Ahmad al-Khatib, who on 28 January 1976 was detained by Syrian intelligence for his involvement in an armed attack against the convoy of Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam,⁸¹ would emerge a few weeks later as the champion of Arabism in Lebanon was for Damascus difficult to tolerate. There was also another cause for concern: that Khatib's action and the escalation of warfare it generated, especially in the south, would provoke war with Israel, something that Damascus sought to avoid.⁸² Syrian fears, however, were misplaced since Khatib was in contact with the Israelis and AAL officers co-ordinated with them in the south.⁸³

In a meeting held on 26 February 1976 at the seat of the Druze Shaykh al-'Aql Muhammad Abu Shaqra and attended by Mufti Khalid, Imam al-Sadr, Arafat, Jumblatt, Karame and three senior Syrian officials, Hikmat al-Shihabi, Naji Jamil and Abdul-Halim Khaddam, the latter was categorical about the need to end the Khatib movement.⁸⁴ Arafat and Jumblatt in particular defended the 'phenomenon' of Ahmad al-Khatib and praised his 'legendary' role in defending the nationalist and Palestinian forces. Little moved by this testimony, Khaddam replied that if 'Ahmad al-Khatib is not ended, he will become a Syrian problem and not a Lebanese problem ... Let him join the [Lebanese] army or the Progressive Socialist Party ... There are Arab countries that pay for him. Libya does not mind the loss of a few million, but it is difficult to have an army at the Syrian border.'⁸⁵

The creation of the AAL was a decisive turning point in the course of the war. It occurred at a time when several Lebanese leaders were prepared to accept Syria's intervention to help find a political settlement. Whether or not the Constitutional Document would have ended the war is an open question. However, the disintegration of the army made any attempts at finding a settlement, impossible. Instead, fighting erupted on new fronts.

Notes

- 1 Interview with Karim Pakradouni, 16 August 1995.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 *Al-Nahar*, 7 December 1975. See Joseph Saadé, *Victime et Bourreau* (Paris: ClamannLevy 1989): 93–106.
- 5 *Al-Nahar*, 7 December 1975.
- 6 Interview with Karim Pakradouni, 16 August 1995.
- 7 Ibid. Kataeb committee members were Joseph Chader, Karim Pakradouni, Edmond Rizk and Joseph Hashem.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 *Al-Nahar*, 20 December 1975.
- 11 Ibid., 6 January 1976.
- 12 Ibid., 24 January 1975.
- 13 Mohsin Dalloul, *Al-Wasat*, 10 March 1997, p. 34.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 See Khalid, *Al-Muslimun...*, pp. 262–76 and 83.
- 18 Interview with Fawaz Traboulsi, 12 May 1996.
- 19 *Al-Nahar*, 20 January 1976. For details on the Qadisiyya, 'Ayn Jalout and Hittin brigades, see Walid Khalidi, *Conflict...*, p. 169.
- 20 Lucien Mounir Dahdah, *Al-Mawarina wa Murashahuhum, Suriyya wa Lubnan wa alWifaq* (Beirut; n.p., 1989): 5.
- 21 The Front included Camille Chamoun, Pierre Gemayel, Charles Malik (philosopher and prominent Greek Orthodox intellectual), Sa'id Akl (well-known poet), Father Charbel Kassis (Superior-General of Lebanese Maronite Order), Fouad Chemali (leader of al-Tanzim militia) and Chaker Abu Sleiman (head of the Maronite League).
- 22 On the various phases of the Syrian intervention, see Naomi Joy Weinberger, *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon: The 1975–76 Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). See also Adeed I. Dawisha, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis* (London: Macmillan Press, 1980); Chamussy, *Chronique...*, pp. 141–76; Itamar Rabinovich, 'The Limits of Military Power,' in P. Edward Haley and Lewis W. Snider, (eds), *Lebanon in Crisis: Participants and Issues* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979): 55–73.
- 23 Interview with Lucien Dahdah, 7 February 1997.
- 24 Ibid. Lucien Dahdah's brother is married to Frangiyeh's daughter.
- 25 Ibid. According to Mohsin Dalloul, Dahdah's name was proposed as a go-between between Damascus and Frangiyeh in a meeting held in Damascus in the presence of Asad, Khaddam and Naji Jamil. The meeting was held upon Kamal Jumblatt's request to stop the fighting following the downfall of Karantina. *Al-Wasat*, 10 March 1997, p. 34.
- 26 Interview with Lucien Dahdah, 7 February 1997.

- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 *Al-Nahar*, 8 February 1976.
- 34 Yezid Sayigh, 'The Palestinians', p. 32.
- 35 Ibid., p. 31.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 On the provisions of the Constitutional Document, see Deeb, *The Lebanese Civil War*, pp. 85–8. See also Gorla, *Sovereignty...*, pp. 218–20.
- 38 For excerpts of the English text of the Constitutional Document, see Khalidi, *Conflict...*, pp. 189–91.
- 39 Khalid, *Al-Muslimun...*, pp. 234–40.
- 40 Meetings held on 30 January 1976 and 17 May 1976. Ibid., pp. 221–7 and pp. 276–85.
- 41 Ibid., p. 283.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid., p. 279.
- 44 Ibid., p. 281.
- 45 Ibid., pp. 222 and 281.
- 46 Ibid., p. 281.
- 47 Deeb, *The Lebanese Civil War*, p. 87.
- 48 Khalid, *Al-Muslimun...*, pp. 199–206 and pp. 270–9.
- 49 George Hawi, *al-Wasat*, 17 June 1996, p. 36.
- 50 Khalid, *Al-Muslimun...*, p. 284.
- 51 Interview with Mohsin Ibrahim, 6 March 1997.
- 52 Interview with Ghassan Tuéni, 5 February 1997.
- 53 Interview with Karim Pakradouni, 6 June 1996. Another meeting took place in early June 1976 between Jumblatt and Bashir Gemayel. It came after the assassination of Jumblatt's sister. For details, see Mohsin Dalloul, *al-Wasat*, 10 March 1997, pp. 36–7.
- 54 Pakradouni, *ibid.*
- 55 See Shruru, *Al-Ahzab...*, pp. 92–4.
- 56 George Hawi, *al-Wasat*, 17 June 1996, p. 36. See also Mohsin Dalloul, *al-Wasat*, 17 March 1997, p. 33.
- 57 Interview with Fawaz Traboulsi, 12 May 1996.
- 58 See Chamussy, *Chronique...*, pp. 138–52. See also Shruru, *Al-Ahzab...*, pp. 283–305.
- 59 George Hawi, *al-Wasat*, 17 June 1996, p. 35.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 *Al-Nahar*, 9 March 1976. The command council of the Arab Army of Lebanon when it was formed included in addition to Khatib, Lieutenants Omar 'Abdallah, Bassam alIdlbi, Mu'in Hatoum, Amin Qassim. Shruru, *Al-Ahzab...*, p. 285.

- 62 See Hafiz al-Asad's speech of July 20, 1976 in *al-Nahar*, 21 July 1976.
- 63 *Al-Nahar*, 12 March 1976.
- 64 Interview with a former high ranking Lebanese army officer who did not want to be identified. 20 March 1994.
- 65 In his 20 July 1972 speech, Asad alludes to Palestinian involvement in the Ahdab affair. *Al-Nahar*, 21 July 1976. See also Mohsin Dalloul, *al-Wasat*, 17 March 1997, pp. 34–5.
- 66 George Hawi, *al-Wasat*, 17 June 1996. p. 35.
- 67 Abu Iyad, *My Home...*, p. 183.
- 68 Chamussy, *Chronique...*, pp. 142–7. See also 'Amer Mashmushy, *al-Anba'*, 30 January 1976, pp. 12–19.
- 69 Figuié, *Le Point...*, p. 112.
- 70 *Al-Nahar*, 26 March 1976. The presidential palace came under heavy shelling from Palestinian artillery, including pro-Syrian Sa'iqa. Interview with a former Lebanese Army officer, 20 March 1994.
- 71 On Lebanon's Arabism as viewed by the AAL, see *Jaysh al-'Uruba Jaysh Lubnan* (Beirut: Manshur al-Sawt al-Jamahir, 1979). See also *Al-Tha'ir al-'Arabi* 1 June 1976, pp. 22–4. On the links of the AAL with Islamic movements, see Chamussy, *Chronique...*, pp. 229–30.
- 72 Estimates vary. But the size of the AAL continued to change in 1976.
- 73 Interview with a former Lebanese activist in Fateh, 10 June 1995. Palestinian military commanders who assisted the AAL were: Hajj Isma'il, Ala' Afandi, Abu al-Tayib (deputy of Abu Hassan Salameh).
- 74 Interview with Mohsin Ibrahim, 6 March 1997. Also interview with George Hawi, 7 April 1997.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Mohsin Dalloul, *al-Wasat*, 17 March 1997, p. 34.
- 77 Interview with a former high-ranking Lebanese army officer who did not want to be identified, 17 March 1996. George Hawi highlights the Libyan role in supporting the creation of the AAL to confront the 'popular army' created by Jumblatt and the Lebanese Communist Party. *Al-Wasat*, 17 June 1996, p. 35.
- 78 Interview with a former Lebanese activist in Fateh who did not want to be identified, 10 June 1995.
- 79 Yezid Sayigh, 'The Palestinians', p. 33.
- 80 Ibid., p. 32.
- 81 *Al-Nahar*, 29 January 1976. For Khaddam, Khatib intended to assassinate him. Interview with Lucien Dahdah, 7 February 1997.
- 82 Ibid., 7 February 1997.
- 83 According to a Lebanese army report, Ahmad al-Khatib visited Israel and conferred with Israeli military officials three times in April and May 1976. Also four officers of AAL visited Israel and kept channels of communications open between the two sides in summer 1976.
- 84 Khalid, *Al-Muslimun...*, pp. 240–4.
- 85 Ibid., p. 241.

The Palestinian-Syrian War

In March 1976 the notable military development was the PLO-Leftist offensive in the Mountain which began on 17 March and led to the capture of several villages in the Upper Matn region.¹ Another PLO-Leftist offensive took place on 21 March in the hotel district in Beirut, and drove Kataeb forces out of that area. These military operations, particularly the opening of a new front in the Mountain, were alarming developments not only for the Christian forces but also for Syria, all the more so as they came after the failure of the Constitutional Document and the break-up of the Lebanese army.

According to George Hawi, military escalation in the Mountain was initially suggested by Palestinian leaders.² In a meeting held in early March in the village of Souq al-Gharb and attended by Arafat, Abu Jihad, Abu Iyad, in addition to Jumblatt, Hawi and Mohsin Ibrahim, Palestinian leaders advocated the opening of a new front in the Mountain.³ For them, the Mountain front had a dual purpose: to put military pressure on Christian forces especially in the central part of Mount Lebanon, to prevent an assault on the Tal-Za'tar camp, and to mobilise Arab and international support for PLO-Leftist forces.⁴

Jumblatt initially opposed the idea; he believed that a large scale war in the Mountain would lead to Lebanon's total disintegration.⁵ But he then went along with the proposed scheme, though conditionally. Jumblatt's condition was that once the Mountain front was open, the war should continue until the objective of changing the political system was reached.⁶ Jumblatt, in other words, favoured military escalation that would lead to

political change by military means. Unfinished wars and half victories did not bode well with Jumblatt, since it was not worth taking the risk of a large scale war in the Mountain if it was only for tactical reasons and for limited military objectives. Fateh leaders accepted Jumblatt's condition.⁷

Another follow-up meeting was held in the Sabra camp and was attended by Fateh military commanders Abu Saleh and Abu Khalid al-'Amili and others to discuss the military plan for the Mountain war.⁸ Co-ordination was also made with Ahmad al-Khatib's AAL. The offensive began in the Upper Matn region in mid-March. During the next three months, military operations expanded to other parts in the Mountain.

Combating the Constitutional Vacuum: Syria and the United States Meanwhile, war continued in Beirut but now on the political 'front' of presidential election. On 13 March 1976 sixty-six deputies (two thirds of the chamber) signed a petition in which they demanded the resignation of President Frangiyeh 'to preserve legality and the effectiveness of constitutional institutions'.⁹ This move was opposed by Chamoun and Gemayel who argued that Frangiyeh should not be forced to resign.¹⁰ Frangiyeh, for his part, was not willing to resign under pressure. Replying to his critics, the president asked how his resignation would end the war, and what guarantees were there to prevent a constitutional vacuum should he leave office.¹¹ He then explained how he was prevented by premiers Rashid al-Solh and Rashid Karamé from using the

army to contain conflict since the Sidon events in February 1975. He also stated that Karame was 'imposed' on him as prime minister by the Muslim establishment and that he accepted with the understanding that Karame would support army intervention to end the crisis.¹²

Another demand for Frangiyeh's resignation came from Jumblatt and Arafat. While Jumblatt warned that Frangiyeh's insistence to stay in office would eventually lead to 'total revolution',¹³ Arafat called upon Syrian President Asad to convince Frangiyeh to resign.¹⁴ For Asad, the situation was not as clear-cut since Frangiyeh's resignation without prior agreement on a successor was a shot in the dark. A middle ground solution was favoured whereby a successor to Frangiyeh would be elected prior to the end of his term with the understanding that the president would resign following the election.¹⁵ These issues were negotiated with Frangiyeh by Asad's three envoys, Jamil, Shihabi and Khaddam. Syrian officials stayed in the Ba'abda presidential palace for nearly two months to monitor the events prior and after the signing of the Constitutional Document.¹⁶ They left immediately after the Ahdab coup. So did Syrian liaison officers with the Lebanese army.

The candidate supported by Syria and by Christian leaders was Elias Sarkis. Prior to his election, Sarkis met with the three Syrian officials in Ba'abda and worked closely with Frangiyeh.¹⁷ Also in preparation for the presidential election, Karame, Speaker Ass'ad and Sa'eb Salam went to Damascus on 20 April and were informed of Syria's opposition to military escalation. The trip was scheduled the day before, but was cancelled because a bomb exploded in the airplane that the three politicians were supposed to take to Damascus.

The presidency now was the last vestige of legal authority. Asad needed to face Arafat and other Arab rivals, notably Egypt and Iraq. Syria's priority in April 1976 was the preservation of Lebanese 'legality' (*al-sh ar'iyya*). It was through the cover of state legality that Syria could justify widening the

scope of its military intervention in Lebanon. In practice, this meant Syria's support for the amendment of Article 73 of the constitution to allow the election of a new president six months before the end of Frangiyeh's term. The amendment was unanimously approved by the ninety deputies present (out of a total of ninety-nine) in a parliamentary session which lasted eleven minutes.¹⁸ Jumblatt and Eddé did not attend.

Preparations for the election of a successor to Frangiyeh had been underway for some time. In addition to Damascus, most involved in this endeavour was the United States. Active American interest in the war in Lebanon came late. Nearly a year after war started, Washington hastily sent a special presidential envoy L. Dean Brown to Lebanon on a 'fact finding' mission.¹⁹ A Middle East specialist and a former ambassador to Jordan during the 1970–71 war, Brown conducted an internal Lebanese-style 'shuttle diplomacy' in April–May 1976. Brown met with leaders of the various communities and conveyed Washington's message to the protagonists.

While the facts about the war were known to Washington Brown's mission had several objectives. First, to pave the way for the election of a new president to avoid a constitutional vacuum: Washington's profile for Frangiyeh's successor applied to Elias Sarkis. Second, to stress American opposition to the internationalisation of conflict and to any political formula which would lead to a drastic restructuring of the political system.

Third, to pave the way for Syria's military intervention in Lebanon. This meant laying the groundwork for the establishment of 'red line' zones between Syria and Israel in Lebanon.²⁰ As early as January 1976 Washington saw that Syria was playing a 'moderating role' in Lebanon.²¹ On 14 April, during Brown's visit, Israeli prime minister Rabin announced the existence of an unspecified 'red line' in Lebanon, beyond which Syrian forces would not be allowed to move.²² It was also in April that Israel sent its first arms shipment to the Christian forces.²³ Earlier in 1976 the first direct contacts between Chamoun, the Kataeb Party and Israel were established.²⁴ The main purpose was to seek military assistance.²⁵

Fourth, to prevent any spillover of the Lebanon war onto the broader regional scene, something which the Soviets and their local clients would seek to exploit to undermine American influence in the region. Fifth,

Washington was in favour of political reforms, as outlined in the Constitutional Document, and opposed a 'military solution', one that would give the PLO and Jumblatt the upper hand. A PLO-dominated Lebanon at odds with both Syria and Israel would aggravate conflict and would thus lead to further instability.

In essence, Washington's main concern was to contain conflict by whatever available means. But for any action to be viable, military balance had to be preserved. On that objective, Washington and Damascus were in agreement; they both opposed PLO-Leftist military victory, though for different reasons. Under the circumstances that prevailed in mid-1976, what suited Washington best was the intervention of Syria to help 'stabilise' Lebanon. For American secretary of state Henry Kissinger, 'Pax Syriana' was the least costly instrument of intervention. In the last year of a presidential term, following the Watergate scandal, Washington was little willing and much less prepared to undertake active political mediation in Lebanon beyond what was needed to prevent escalation. Nor was American military intervention a viable option, something that Washington ruled out since war began.

Unlike the 1958 crisis, when the United States sent marines to Lebanon to back the mission of the then presidential envoy Robert Murphy, in 1976 Washington sent an envoy but without a fleet. Contrary to the late 1950s, when Lebanon was at the centre of inter-Arab rivalry and Cold War politics, in 1976 Lebanon was a marginal side-show for regional conflicts. Two months after Brown's visit, newly arrived American ambassador Francis Meloy and his secretary Robert Warring along with their driver were kidnapped in Beirut and murdered by a radical Palestinian group. This was the third kidnapping of American diplomats since the beginning of the war – the first was Colonel Morgan and the second Charles Gallagher and William Dakes on 22 October 1975. They were all released unharmed. Following the assassination of Ambassador Meloy, American citizens were evacuated from Lebanon. To keep minimum contact with Lebanon, Washington appointed a special representative, diplomat Talcott Seelye, who came to Lebanon in June and July and kept a low profile. The objectives of American policy, as elaborated by Brown, were pursued until the end of hostilities in the Autumn of 1976.

Another attempt by a Western power at settling the conflict was that of France. A special envoy of French president Giscard d'Estaing, Georges Gorse, was dispatched to Lebanon in April 1976. Gorse, whose presence in Lebanon coincided with that of American envoy Brown, met with Lebanese leaders. On 13 April, Gorse met with Asad and Khaddam in Damascus. France's means were limited; so was its impact on the protagonists both Lebanese and non-Lebanese.

Asad Versus Jumblatt As fighting broadened, attempts were made, once again, to reach a political settlement. Views on the course of the war and its objectives between Arafat and Jumblatt began to diverge. While Jumblatt pressed for a 'military solution', Arafat was more cautious.

As relations between Arafat and Asad improved, albeit temporarily, Arafat was now in a position to perform a mediating role between Damascus and Jumblatt. It was at Arafat's request that Jumblatt went to Damascus to meet with Asad. Arafat informed Syrian leaders that Jumblatt would accept a cease-fire only after conferring with Asad. The meeting took place on 27 March 1976. This nine-hour meeting was the last face-to-face encounter that the two men ever had (nearly a year later on 16 March 1977, Jumblatt was assassinated).

Jumblatt went to Damascus hoping to get weapons from Syria, not to announce a cease-fire, as stated by Mohsin Dalloul, who accompanied Jumblatt along with 'Abbas Khalaf.²⁶ On his way to Damascus, Jumblatt made a statement to journalists and hoped to receive them soon in Bikfaya and Jounieh.²⁷ Ten days earlier PLO-Leftist forces had launched their first major offensive in the Mountain.

In the meeting, Asad inquired about the statement and told Jumblatt that it would be better to deny it since the purpose of the meeting was to end the fighting. To this Jumblatt replied that fighting could be ended in a few days only if proper weapons needed by the Left and the PLO were made available by Syria.²⁸ Asad replied that the meeting intended to reach a

settlement and not to escalate war.²⁹ He then explained that the war was futile and the country was deeply divided.³⁰ Therefore, fighting had to end, and to achieve that objective Asad offered to help improve relations between the various Lebanese groups.³¹ Jumblatt agreed, but only after achieving military victory.³² Asad's attempt to persuade Jumblatt to opt for a political settlement failed. Jumblatt was determined to score a military victory and alter the political system.³³ As Jumblatt returned to Lebanon, an unsuccessful offensive by PLO-Leftist forces took place against the Christian village of Kahhaleh overlooking Beirut and the presidential palace in Ba'abda.

Where Jumblatt saw an 'historic opportunity' to Arabise Lebanon and to make it an 'oasis for freedom and democracy',³⁴ Asad saw that it was an opportune time to implement the reforms agreed upon in the Constitutional Document and to build on what had been already achieved. Where Jumblatt seemed convinced that the military solution was feasible and free of any sectarian animosity, Asad was convinced that such a war was conducive to sectarian bloodshed and was not acceptable regionally and internationally. For Asad, the war in Lebanon had already crossed the 'red line'.³⁵ Therefore, it was time to end it and to opt for a political settlement based on the proposed reforms which redressed the balance in favour of Muslims.

On no issue of substance were the two men in agreement. The divide between them could not be bridged. Asad, the head of state, had calculations to make and a strategy to follow. Jumblatt, seeking to rule a state, had a completely different agenda and, by extension, was not careful in weighing the outcome of his deed. Asad's assessment of that stormy meeting was revealed in a highly publicised speech delivered on 20 July 1976. For Asad, Jumblatt's socialist and progressive 'masks' had fallen;³⁶ Jumblatt was not interested in political reforms but was rather settling a 140-year old sectarian vendetta.³⁷

While the political divorce between Asad and Jumblatt was final, relations between Asad and Arafat, following a meeting they held on 16 April, had not yet reached breaking point. The meeting came four days after the entry of Syrian troops into Lebanon who gained control over the strategic Dahr al-Baydar pass on the Beirut-Damascus highway. PLO forces in the Beqa, controlled by Abu Jihad, mounted little resistance.³⁸ The two sides agreed

on a seven-point plan, which included a cease-fire and the reactivation of the joint Lebanese-Syrian-Palestinian Higher Security Committee. They also agreed to reject American plans for the region, oppose the partition of Lebanon, prevent the Arabisation and internationalisation of the crisis, and support Syria's initiatives to end the war. The agreement, however, changed little in the position of the two sides. Differences between Syria and the PLO grew wider. Arafat strengthened ties with Egypt. PLA units based in Egypt and Iraq were transferred to Lebanon. Preparations by both Syria and the PLO were underway for further military escalation.

Asad disclosed that a few weeks after the signing of the April agreement with the PLO, Fateh and other Palestinian groups attacked pro-Syrian groups in Beirut (Sa'iqa, the Ba'th Party and other Lebanese groups) as well as Syrian troops stationed in Palestinian camps since 1973, to operate the camp's defence system against Israeli air raids.³⁹ In June, Sa'iqa forces were rooted out from their positions in West Beirut. Many were killed in the process, while others sought refuge in East Beirut. Most involved in these operations was Abu Iyad. Asad then was adamant: 'he would not accept ... that any Arab or Palestinian would tell [him] to leave Lebanon.'⁴⁰

Presidential Election Under Fire The next major confrontation was over the election of a new president. The election of Elias Sarkis on 8 May 1976 (who was sworn into office later on 23 September 1976 at the Park Hotel in Chataura) would not have been possible without Syrian backing. The temporary parliament building where the election took place (Villa Mansour) was situated along the demarcation line. It came under heavy shelling by Palestinian and Leftist forces.⁴¹ Some deputies and their bodyguards were hit by shrapnel while others received threats

preventing them from attending the parliamentary session.⁴² Road access to the building was insured by elements of two Syrian-controlled groups Sa'iqa and units of the Palestine Liberation Army.⁴³

The election of Sarkis with 66 votes (out of 69 deputies present) was a severe blow to Jumblatt who strongly condemned the election. His candidate for the presidency was Raymond Eddé.⁴⁴ The latter was on bad terms with other Maronite leaders and was opposed by Damascus. Eddé boycotted the election, so did Sa'eb Salam and Rashid al-Solh.

While Arafat condemned the election of Sarkis, differences between Jumblatt and Arafat over the handling of the election were increasingly visible. To keep lines open with Syria, Arafat did not honour the promises he had made to Jumblatt to prevent the convening of the parliamentary session to elect the new president.⁴⁵ Arafat's forces based in the Mountain and led by Abu al-Mu'tasim, an associate of Abu Jihad, did not shell the temporary parliament building, as agreed upon with Jumblatt. Nor did Palestinian forces, which controlled access from West Beirut, prevent deputies from reaching the temporary parliament building. In reality, not only did Arafat fail to provide support to Jumblatt, he had already committed himself to Asad to facilitate the election of Sarkis. And to confirm his 'neutrality', Arafat met secretly with Sarkis prior to the election.⁴⁶ Fateh's evasive position is best explained by Abu Iyad: 'the Resistance finally decided that it wasn't worth it to incur the terrible wrath of Damascus [over the presidential election] ... As a gesture to the left the Fedayin subjected the building where the deputies met... to a heavy shelling, just enough to show their displeasure but not enough to block the election of a new president.'⁴⁷

Apart from Iraq's involvement in the war on the side of the PLO and the Left, the other active Arab party, both politically and militarily, in 1976 was Libya.⁴⁸ Iraq and Libya were also the two major financial supporters of the Lebanese Left and the Palestinians.⁴⁹ The arrival of Libyan premier Abdul-Salam Jalloud in Beirut on 17 May 1976 was intended to underscore Libya's support for the PLO and its Lebanese allies. Having failed to

moderate Syria's stand towards Arafat, Jalloud sought to cool down tension between the two sides.⁵⁰

Jalloud met with Arafat, Karame, Yafi, Druze Shaykh al-'Aql Abu Shaqra and Mufti Khalid at the latter's residence (Sadr did not attend the meeting but backed the decisions). Jalloud's task was to convince the conferees to support the Syrian initiative to end the war on the basis of the Constitutional Document, as it contained many positive elements that would strengthen 'the nationalist environment' in Lebanon.⁵¹ He urged the conferees to preserve unity of ranks between the nationalist forces, Syria and the PLO. This is because Lebanon was an arena for the nationalist struggle against Israel.⁵² Short of a military victory which would drastically tip the balance in favour of Muslim and Leftist forces, Jalloud explained, the Syrian initiative was the best alternative for all parties.⁵³

Jalloud called upon the conferees to patch up their differences with Syria, implement the Constitutional Document and continue the struggle via political means.⁵⁴ He then stated that Libya was willing to support a military campaign leading to victory but Syria, he added, 'was not willing to fight either in support of Muslims or Christians or the Palestinians ... Syria would fight only for the Constitutional Document'.⁵⁵ Jalloud failed to prevail upon the conferees to accept the Syrian position. At that time, Arafat was confident of his military capabilities to defeat the enemy, as he explained to Jalloud.⁵⁶ Indeed, on 12 May, five days before Jalloud's arrival, PLO-Leftist forces opened a new front in the Mountain area of 'Uyun al-Siman overlooking the Christian region of Kisirwan. On 23 May Abu Iyad, addressing a student gathering at Beirut Arab University, asserted that 'the road to Palestine could not pass except through Lebanon'.⁵⁷ Those who died in the war, continued Abu Iyad, were fighting to 'prevent the conspiracy against the two united peoples, the Lebanese and the Palestinians'.

Asad versus Arafat Meanwhile, Syria continued its military build-up, particularly in Beirut, where three Syrian commando battalions were deployed in the

airport area.⁵⁸ The first major Syrian offensive began on 6 June 1976. A few days earlier, 8,000 Syrian troops entered Lebanon from the north into the 'Akkar region and into the Beqa, backed by two hundred tanks and armoured vehicles.⁵⁹ PLO and Leftist leaders declared their intention to stop the 'syrian invasion of Lebanon.⁶⁰ But Syria was operating on firm ground. Its military intervention received the support of Frangiyeh and Karame as well as that of Christian leaders. Syrian troops advanced along two axes, one towards the Mountain village of Sofar where fighting took place with PLO-Leftist forces, and the other towards Sidon. West Beirut was blockaded by Syrian forces.⁶¹ In the coastal city of Sidon, 13 Syrian tanks were destroyed in battles with Palestinian forces led by Abu Musa.⁶²

PLO guerrillas were also engaged in another military confrontation with the Christian forces.⁶³ On 22 June 1976, forces, led by the National Liberal Party, launched an offensive against the Tal-Za'tar Palestinian camp, one of the largest and the most heavily armed camps in the country. Fighting went on for over 50 days and resulted in a high casualty toll on both sides. The fall of Tal-Za'tar, located in Dikwaneh, a predominantly Christian suburb of East Beirut, preceded a few weeks earlier by the fall of another smaller camp nearby, Jisr al-Basha, was the first major military setback suffered by the PLO since the outbreak of the war in April 1975.

In mid-June 1976, 17 Libyan officers were called upon to supervise the implementation of the cease-fire between Palestinian and Syrian forces in

Beirut. In early July 1976, 1,300 Saudi and Sudanese troops arrived in Lebanon. Jalloud's mediation paved the way for yet another Palestinian-Syrian agreement signed in Damascus on 29 July.⁶⁴ It called for a cease-fire and for the designation of a representative of the Arab League to chair the Joint Lebanese-Syrian-Palestinian Higher Security Committee. According to the Damascus agreement, talks between Lebanese groups would be headed by President-elect Sarkis, the Constitutional Document would be the basis of national reconciliation and PLO-Lebanese relations would be regulated in accordance with the 1969 Cairo Agreement.

The agreement was opposed by Palestinian organisations, for it was viewed as a 'Palestinian recognition of Syria's occupation of Lebanon'.⁶⁵ The agreement meant a de facto Arab and Palestinian recognition of Syria's military presence in Lebanon. There was also dissent within Fateh over its policy towards Syria. One hard-line group within Fateh led by Abu Saleh and Abu Musa advocated further military confrontation with Syria, while Arafat and Abu Jihad favoured accommodation.⁶⁶

In yet another ironic development in Lebanon's open-ended wars, Damascus found itself forcing the PLO to abide by the Cairo Agreement after having supported its repeated violations ever since it was signed in 1969. The Damascus agreement provided a respite for the protagonists. For the PLO, it provided a breathing space to assess its Arab and Lebanese options and to prepare for the imminent final showdown with the Syrian Army. It also meant PLO recognition of partial defeat following military losses in Beirut and the Mountain. The agreement came only after Arafat realised that neither Moscow nor Arab regimes were in a position to deter Syria from further military involvement in the war.⁶⁷

For Syria, the agreement was the calm before the storm. It was Asad's last warning to Arafat. Asad was greatly distrustful of Arafat's manoeuvres and attempts to mobilise Arab and Soviet support in opposition to Damascus. Arafat also sought to draw Baghdad into the war to counter Syrian power. Saddam Hussein, who was then vice-president, proposed to Jumblatt and the Left that they should proclaim autonomy in territories controlled by PLO-Leftist forces and declare Sidon as capital of these territories.⁶⁸ Iraq would then recognise this de facto partition as would the Soviets, according to Saddam Hussein.⁶⁹ Jumblatt and Arafat rejected the proposal.⁷⁰ While

this far-fetched scheme did not materialise, military assistance from Iraq and Egypt was forthcoming. By late August, the fighting force of the PLO and its Lebanese allies was about 40,000.⁷¹

In July 1976 fighting intensified between PLO-Leftist forces and Christian forces. On 5 July, PLO-Leftist forces attacked the coastal town of Chekka in the north in an attempt to advance towards the Christian region in central Mount Lebanon. Christian forces mounted a counter-offensive in which they recaptured Chekka and overran the Kura region, which until then was under Leftist-PLO control. Fighting also continued in the Upper Matn region. On 10 August 1976, Christian forces launched their final assault on Tal-Za'tar. A few days prior to the assault, Bashir Gemayel and Dany Chamoun, the two military commanders of the militias of the Kataeb Party and the National Liberal Party met with Syrian leaders in Damascus.⁷² They were delegated by Christian leaders and their discussions centred on military issues. On 6 August, the Shia-inhabited area of Nab'a on the outskirts of East Beirut was captured by Christian forces, resulting in the displacement of many people. Syrian leaders, who were in contact with Musa al-Sadr, cleared this operation.⁷³

Following the fall of Tal-Za'tar and the series of military setbacks suffered by PLO forces, Arafat had no choice but to seek accommodation with Syria. At Arafat's request, a meeting was held between Syrian and Palestinian officials. Talks went on for two consecutive days on 10–11 September 1976 in the village of Sofar. The Syrian position was presented by officers Naji Jamil and Mohammad al-Kholi to a Palestinian delegation headed by Abu Iyad.⁷⁴ According to Kholi, Arafat intended to test Syria's real intentions, to buy time to improve the Palestinian military situation, and to have Arab regimes exercise pressure on Syria.⁷⁵ Kholi's assessment of the meeting was that Fateh had not changed its policies.⁷⁶ Arafat was particularly alarmed by the talks that Gemayel, Chamoun and Muslim leaders had in Damascus in early September.⁷⁷

Two other high-level meetings took place in the town of Chtaura on 17–19 September 1976. They grouped Sarkis, Arafat, Naji Jamil and Arab League representative Hassan Sabri al-Kholi. The talks centred on the withdrawal of PLO forces from the Mountain as a first step towards a final settlement.⁷⁸ The first meeting went well. The second meeting, however,

was stormy. Replying to Arafat's demand for the withdrawal of the Syrian army, Naji Jamil said that 'the presence of the Syrian army in Lebanon is a Lebanese affair.... It is only at the request of the [Lebanese president] that we will withdraw. We cannot tolerate another party bringing up the matter with us.'⁷⁹ And when Arafat demanded guarantees for the security of the Palestinian Resistance, Sarkis replied that he and president Asad were the guarantee.⁸⁰ Arafat then demanded that the implementation of any accord on withdrawal should be placed under Arab League auspices. Sarkis accepted the proposal.⁸¹

In the first meeting, Arafat agreed on a partial withdrawal from the Mountain over a period of fifteen days. For this reason a Lebanese-Palestinian military committee was formed to supervise the implementation of the accord.⁸² But in the second meeting, Arafat reverted to his initial position. He rejected any partial withdrawal and linked total withdrawal to two conditions: Syrian dialogue with Jumblatt and withdrawal of the Syrian army from the village of Sofar.⁸³ Damascus rejected these conditions.

Irrespective of the calculations that led Arafat to stick to a hard-line position, he definitely misread Syria's intentions. Damascus was neither bluffing nor buying time; it issued an ultimatum. Indeed, a Palestinian-Syrian military confrontation became inevitable. Only a trigger was needed. That came on 26 September, when four Palestinian commandos of the Iraqi-controlled Arab Liberation Front stormed the Semiramis hotel in Damascus⁸⁴ killing five people and injuring several others. The next day the three surviving commandos were hanged. Damascus accused Fateh for the attack.

Immediately after the Damascus operation, Muhammad al-Kholi rushed off to Beirut to inform President Sarkis, who took office three days earlier on 23 September, as well as Chamoun, Gemayel and Frangiyeh of Asad's decision to carry out a large scale military operation against PLO forces in the Mountain.⁸⁵ Initially, Sarkis was opposed to a military operation and favoured a political solution.⁸⁶ Frangiyeh gave his approval while Chamoun and Gemayel gave it full support.⁸⁷

On 28 September 1976 the Syrian army launched a massive attack on PLO forces in the Mountain. Troops were able to advance as PLO forces were forced to withdraw from the Upper Matn region and from other parts

of the Mountain. Soon after the offensive began, Arafat asked Sarkis to intervene with Damascus to halt Syrian army advancement and agree on a cease-fire. Sarkis replied by asking Arafat to provide written proposals before he can intervene with Damascus.⁸⁸ On 11 October, a working paper was prepared by representatives of Sarkis and Arafat in the presence of Hassan Sabri al-Kholi.⁸⁹ It called for an end of hostilities, the withdrawal of troops, national reconciliation and the implementation of the Cairo Agreement. But this move was viewed by Asad as yet another delaying tactic aimed at undermining Syria's political position while averting the possibility of further military advance.

The truce was short-lived. On 12 October, Syria resumed its offensive following an attack carried out by then pro-Iraqi Abu Nidal group on the Syrian embassy in Rome. It was met by stiff resistance in Bhamdoun and 'Aley, but Syrian troops continued their advance towards Beirut. Another Syrian force moved down from Jezzin towards the southern coastal city of Sidon, where heavy fighting broke out with Palestinian forces resulting in heavy losses on both sides. On 16 October a cease-fire was announced, but was violated two days later when Beirut came under heavy shelling from all sides.

Notes

- 1 *Al-Nahar*, 18 and 27 March 1976.
- 2 Interview with George Hawi, 7 April 1997.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 *Al-Nahar*, 14 March 1976.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid., 21 July 1976. See also Brynen, *Sanctuary...*, p. 96.
- 15 Interview with Lucien Dahdah, 7 February 1997.
- 16 Ibid. The three Syrian officials kept a continuous presence in Ba'abda from mid-January to mid-March 1976.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 *Al-Nahar*, 11 April 1976.
- 19 According to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Brown was sent to Lebanon on short notice. See Walid Khalidi, *Conflict...*, p. 170 (fn 114 and 115).
- 20 Evron, *War and Intervention...*, pp. 45–56. See also Edward E. Azar and Kate Shnayerson, 'United States – Lebanese Relations: A Pocketful of Paradoxes', in Edward E. Azar et al., *The Emergence of a New Lebanon. Fantasy or Reality?* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984): 244–9.
- 21 *Al-Nahar*, 30 January 1976.
- 22 Hof, *Galilee Divided...*, p. 79.
- 23 Interview with a former official in the Lebanese Forces who did not want to be identified. Much of these weapons were Soviet-made captured by Israel in the 1973 Arab–Israeli war. 12 May 1996.
- 24 See Joseph Abu Khalil, *Qissat al-Mawarina fi al-Harb: Sira Zatiyya* (Beirut: Shariqat al-Matbu'at Liltawzi' Walnashr, 1990): 41–55; David Kimche, *The Last Option. After Nasser, Arafat, and Saddam Hussein* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, Macmillan, 1991): 132.
- 25 It was not until after the 1975–76 war that relations between Israel and Christian parties (the Lebanese Forces) were strengthened politically and militarily. See Kimche, *The Last...*, pp. 143–85.
- 26 Mohsin Dalloul, *al-Wasat*, 10 March 1997, p. 36.
- 27 Ibid. Bikfaya is the hometown of the Gemayels and Jounieh is a major Christian city.
- 28 Ibid. Jumblatt specified the weapons canon: 120 mm.

- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 George Hawi, *al-Wasat*, 10 June 1996, p. 36.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 *Al-Nahar*, 21 July 1976. See also Jumblatt's fiery account of Syria's role in the war in *I Speak for Lebanon* (London: Zed Press, 1982): 70–89.
- 37 *Al-Nahar*, 21 July 1976.
- 38 Ibid., 13 April 1976.
- 39 Ibid. In the Tal-Za'tar camp, twenty one Syrian soldiers, who had been stationed there since 1973 at Arafat's request, were killed. Syrian leaders were greatly disturbed by the killing. Interview with Lucien Dahdah, 7 February 1997.
- 40 *Al-Nahar*, 21 July 1976.
- 41 *Al-Nahar*, 9 May 1976.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 George Hawi, *al-Wasat*, 17 June 1996, p. 33. See also Hani al-Hassan, *al-Wasat*, 23 May 1995, p. 36.
- 45 George Hawi, *al-Wasat*, 10 June 1996, p. 37.
- 46 Yezid Sayigh, 'The Palestinians', p. 35.
- 47 Abu Iyad, *My Home...*, pp. 186–7.
- 48 On inter-Arab politics at various stages of the war, see Lewis W. Snider, 'Inter-Arab Relations,' in P. Edward Haley and Lewis W. Snider, (eds.), *Lebanon in Crisis...*, pp. 179–206.
- 49 Mohsin Dalloul, *al-Wasat*, 17 March 1997, p. 31.
- 50 See the verbatim account of the meeting at Dar al-Fatwa which grouped Jalloud, Arafat, Mufti Khalid, Rashid Karame, 'Abdallah al-Yafi, Abu Iyad, Abu Jihad and Hussein al-Quwatli, in Khalid, *Al-Muslimun...*, pp. 276–85.
- 51 Ibid., p. 278.
- 52 Ibid., p. 277.
- 53 Ibid., p. 277.
- 54 Ibid., p. 274.
- 55 Ibid., p. 284.
- 56 Ibid., p. 280.
- 57 *Al-Safir*, 24 May 1976.
- 58 Yezid Sayigh, 'The Palestinians', p. 37.
- 59 Chami and Castoriades, *Days of Tragedy...*, p. 385.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Kassir, *La Guerre du Liban...*, pp. 218–28.

- 64 See text in *al-Nahar*, 30 July 1976.
- 65 Ibid., 31 July 1976.
- 66 Interview with Fawaz Traboulsi, 12 May 1996. Interview with Suleiman Takieddin, 23 April 1997.
- 67 See Jumblatt's account of Moscow's failure to deter Syria from involvement in Lebanon in Jumblatt, *I Speak for Lebanon*, pp. 21–4.
- 68 Mohsin Dalloul, *al-Wasat*, 10 March 1997, p. 35.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Yezid Sayigh, 'The Palestinians', p. 41.
- 72 Interview with Lucien Dahdah, 7 February 1997.
- 73 Yezid Sayigh, 'The Palestinians', p. 41. This provoked controversy over Sadr's role in the fall of Nab'a.
- 74 See Karim Pakradouni, *La Paix Manquée...*, p. 36.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 Ibid., p. 37.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 Ibid., p. 38.
- 82 The committee was composed of officers Ahmad al-Hajj and Moussa Kana'an from the Lebanese army and Abu Jihad and Abu Walid from Fateh.
- 83 Pakradouni, *La Paix Manquée...*, p. 38.
- 84 Ibid., pp. 39–40. According to Samir Kassir the attack was carried out by the Abu Nidal group then operating closely with Iraq. Kassir, *La Guerre du Liban...*, p. 231.
- 85 Pakradouni, *La Paix Manquée...*, pp. 39–40.
- 86 Ibid., p. 40.
- 87 Ibid.
- 88 Ibid.
- 89 Yezid Sayigh, 'The Palestinians', pp. 42–3.

Ending the War

By the end of October, Syrian troops were in control of major PLO strongholds. This marked the end of the third Palestinian war with an Arab party – the first was Jordan in 1970–71, the second in Lebanon since 1975 – in less than a decade of militant Palestinian nationalism.

On 15 October 1976 Saudi Arabia called for a six-member summit meeting of the leaders of Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the PLO, to be held in Riyadh. This provided another chance for Jumblatt to limit the damage and possibly to work out a settlement. Jumblatt went to Cairo, met with Sadat and sought his support to attend the Riyadh meeting.¹ He also tried to have Egypt play an assertive role against Syria.² Neither endeavour was successful. Jumblatt could not secure an invitation to Riyadh,³ nor was Sadat willing to engage in a futile exercise of arm-twisting with Asad over that issue. While in Cairo Jumblatt got the message: he received invitations from the Soviet Union, Algeria and India for political asylum.⁴

While Arafat and other Palestinian leaders were intransigent in their opposition to Syria's role in Lebanon, Jumblatt was more determined to go to extremes.⁵ He had more at stake than the PLO. At worst, the PLO would lose the war, but it would not disappear as a political and military force. Nor would it lose Arab support. Jumblatt, for his part, would stand to lose the unique opportunity to transform the political system by force, though not by his own means, but by those of the PLO. Jumblatt's recovery from defeat would be much more difficult than that of a revolutionary movement with resources as vast as the PLO's.

One reason to explain Jumblatt's maximalist conduct towards the end of the war concerned his misreading of the power equation that prevailed in 1976. Jumblatt's miscalculation was on four counts. The first three were: (i) that the Soviets would deter Syria from military action against PLO-Leftist forces; (ii) that Israel would not allow Syrian large scale military intervention in the war; (iii) that Egypt would prevent Syria from crushing the PLO and Leftist forces. The fourth miscalculation was the gravest: that there would be internal change within Syria targeting the Asad regime.⁶ In more concrete terms, that the Asad regime would be toppled.⁷ Several sources conveyed conflicting information to Jumblatt, notably Palestinian and Egyptian.⁸ Wishful thinking or disinformation, the die was cast.

The idea for an Arab summit meeting to end the war in Lebanon had been in the air since late September. It was initially suggested by Arafat and accepted by the Lebanese and Syrian presidents. For Arafat, Arab intervention provided a counterweight to Syria. Syria at first proposed a seven-member summit that would include Jordan. Egypt objected to Jordan's participation,⁹ probably at the request of Arafat. Sarkis, for his part, preferred a tripartite summit that would include Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.¹⁰

The summit meeting convened on 17–18 October 1976 and was attended by Sadat, Asad, Sarkis, Arafat, Saudi King Khalid and Prince Sabbah of Kuwait. Sarkis stated the Lebanese position regarding the ending of the war. For him, the conflict was not exclusively Lebanese; it was inextricably linked to the PLO armed presence in Lebanon and to its failure to implement the 1969 Cairo Agreement. The war, Sarkis explained, had Arab and international dimensions. He then called for Arab support to help achieve the following four objectives.¹¹

First, the cessation of hostilities throughout Lebanese territory and the immediate implementation of the Cairo Agreement. Second, the PLO should respect Lebanese sovereignty and refrain from intervening in internal Lebanese affairs. Third, the formation of an Arab Deterrent Force (ADF). It would be under Lebanese command and Lebanese authorities would determine its composition and size. The ADF's task would be to end all military confrontations, supervise the implementation of the Cairo Agreement, re-establish order until Lebanon is able to rebuild its own

armed forces. Fourth, provide Arab financial aid for the reconstruction of the country.

On 18 October the issue of the ADF was discussed. The day before, Sarkis had suggested a force of thirty thousand and insisted on Lebanon's command of the Force. He was supported by Khaddam and opposed by Egyptian Foreign Minister Isma'il Fahmi and Arafat, who wanted the ADF to be under the command of the Arab League.¹² But the reconciliation of Asad and Sadat, made possible by the intervention of Saudi Crown Prince Fahd, reflected positively on the meeting. Cairo now backed Asad's position that the ADF should be under the command of the Lebanese president. Sadat proposed the formation of a four-member Arab committee composed of representatives from Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Kuwait to assist the Lebanese president in the implementation of the Cairo Agreement.¹³ He also stressed that the PLO represented the Palestinians in Lebanon as well as in other countries, but was not sovereign inside these different countries.¹⁴

The shift in Sadat's position deprived Arafat of his main support to improve his negotiating position with Syria. He now found himself facing Asad in a duel he could not win. To Asad's intransigent stand regarding the way to end the war, Arafat responded by claiming that Lebanese Muslims demand the withdrawal of Syrian troops. To that Asad replied that 'at gun-point the Muslims would sign anything'.¹⁵ He then added: 'The operation of Semiramis (the Damascus hotel attacked by Palestinian commandos) cost you the Mountain, that of the embassy in Rome cost you Bhamdoun. I will continue to attack you every time there is a Palestinian operation against an Arab target anywhere in the world, irrespective of the [Palestinian] organisation that claims the operation.'¹⁶ Asad meant what he said. Arafat knew that; so did Arab leaders present at the meeting.

The summit ended with the approval of the formation of the ADF under the command of President Sarkis and the formation of a four-member Arab committee to supervise the implementation of the Cairo Agreement over a period of ninety days. A cease-fire would be enforced on 21 October 1976: the official date for ending the 1975–76 war.

On 25 October another Arab summit was held in Cairo. It ratified the resolutions of the Riyadh Summit. Iraq opposed the resolutions and accused

Syria of 'strangling the Palestinians and the progressive forces'.¹⁷ Asad stated his willingness to supply the Arab force by whatever additional troops would be needed after the contribution of troops from other Arab countries.¹⁸ That was a masterful move. It showed Asad's willingness to facilitate the task of the ADF, though he knew that no Arab regime was willing to commit troops that would exceed the number of Syrian troops already in Lebanon. On 10 November, Arab troops began their deployment in three successive phases, first in the Mountain, then in Beirut, and later in other regions of the country.¹⁹

The Riyadh summit reflected the balance of power in Lebanon by the end of 1976.²⁰ Syria emerged as the overwhelming military power in Lebanon. Though unhappy with the outcome, Arab regimes, notably Egypt, Libya and Iraq, accepted the reality of Syrian power in Lebanon. The ADF was formed to bring about the withdrawal of the militias and to implement the Cairo Agreement. On 15 November a force of 8,000 troops backed by 250 tanks entered Beirut and took up positions in various parts in the city. In theory, the ADF had a temporary mission: that of filling the security vacuum until Lebanon's armed forces were in a position to impose order.

The ADF comprised 20–25,000 Syrian troops and smaller contingents totalling 4,500 troops drawn from five Arab countries: 2,000 from Sudan, 1,500 from Saudi Arabia, 500 from Yemen, 500 from the United Arab Emirates and 800 from Libya. (Libya's 700-man contingent withdrew on 3 December 1976).²¹ However, the force capable of military deterrence was the Syrian contingent. While Lebanese militia forces began to vacate their positions, the real challenge for the ADF was the implementation of the Cairo Agreement.²² A failure to make the PLO abide by the Cairo Agreement would block the implementation of the entire Riyadh agreement.

The four-member Arab committee held several meetings between December 1976 and May 1977. Presided by Sarkis, the meetings were intended to find ways to implement the Cairo Agreement.²³ In June 1977, Sarkis declared the failure of the Arab committee and accused Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait of undermining the implementation of the Riyadh agreement.²⁴ The representatives of the three countries rejected the Lebanese interpretation of the Cairo Agreement.²⁵

Meanwhile, new developments came to overshadow the events in Lebanon and to make all parties rethink their position vis-à-vis Lebanon and the PLO: this was the initiation of a new policy towards the Arab–Israeli conflict by newly-elected American president Jimmy Carter. Its first manifestation was the Carter–Asad meeting in Geneva on 9 May 1977. But the earth-shattering development for Syria and the PLO was Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem on 19 November 1977. For Syria, Sadat’s alarming move had to be countered by a new strategy. Its cornerstone was a Syrian-PLO rapprochement in Lebanon. And for it to succeed the resolutions of the Riyadh and Cairo conferences, particularly in relation to the PLO and the implementation of the Cairo Agreement, were put on hold. This meant they would not be implemented.

In December 1977, Yemen withdrew its troops from the ADR Two years later, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates did the same.²⁶ The mission entrusted to the ADF to bring peace to Lebanon was over a few months later. In the end, the Arab Deterrent Force was a misnomer: the troops were mostly Syrian, not Arab; conflict was aggravated, not deterred; and Sarkis was the titular commander of a force he did not control and the president of a country he could not rule.

The War in its Multiple Layers One distinctive feature of the 1975–76 war was the way in which it was transformed in a short period of time from a Lebanese (Christian)–Palestinian war, to an inter-Lebanese and inter-Palestinian war, to finally a Palestinian–Syrian war along with all its regional and international ramifications. What really shaped the course of the war and altered its nature was less internal Lebanese politics and warfare between Lebanese groups than regional power politics and confrontations between Syria and the PLO.²⁷

The second feature of the war lies in its changing political and military dimensions. A distinction between the two dimensions is necessary to explain the evolution of the war. The political dimension of the war was Lebanese, at least on the surface. Its military dimension, however, was much less Lebanese. While Lebanese groups were, of course, full participants in the war, decisive military action was Palestinian and Syrian. Neither the coalition of Christian forces nor Leftist and Muslim forces were in a position to tip the military balance in their favour, and thus radically alter the course of the war, without support by the PLO and/or Syria. This continued until war reached a military stalemate maintained by the PLO and Syria. Military operations ended when fighting between the two sides stopped in October 1976. That, however, did not end the political dimension of the war between the Lebanese.

This brings us to another feature of the war. Once war began, political conflict was quickly militarised. Political parties possessed the organisational infrastructure to mobilise supporters and engage in war. In no time, political parties of all persuasions turned into militias. Only one active political party, the National Bloc headed by Raymond Eddé, did not establish a militia of its own.

Lebanese leaders, like political parties, thought that they were in a position to influence the course of the war. So did PLO leaders, who had reason to believe that they had the upper-hand militarily. But as the war evolved, all parties gradually lost control. Most affected were Lebanese groups. The longer the war went on, the more marginalised they became, both politically and militarily, and the more dependent they became on non-Lebanese parties.

Similarly, the objectives proclaimed by Lebanese groups in the early phases of the war became of little relevance as the war progressed. The three broad objectives – sovereignty identified with Christian groups, reform with Muslim groups and system change with the Left – were quickly overshadowed by immediate priorities and concerns. In practice, the war greatly compromised national sovereignty, disintegrated those state institutions that had to be reformed, and a ‘military solution was pursued to bring about a non-confessional order in Lebanon. In a matter of a few months the war’s objectives for all parties, Lebanese and non-Lebanese,

were reduced to keeping a military hold over areas controlled by the warring factions and the 'defence' of demarcation lines.

With the marginalisation of the war's proclaimed political objectives, its military dimension, particularly after the failure of the Constitutional Document in February 1976, became of paramount importance. At that stage, Syria, with its superior military capabilities, had the upper-hand. The Syrian army intervened 'officially' in the war in April 1976, but its 'unofficial' intervention prior to 1976 was instrumental in shaping not only the course of the war but also the course of conflict in Lebanon since the late 1960s.

From 1968–69 to 1975 Syria was the major external supporter of the PLO. Its role unfolded in three ways. First, the entry of the guerrillas into Lebanon from Syria. This began in the late 1960s, but was accelerated after the PLO's loss of its Jordan base in 1970–71. Second, the entry of weapons, light weapons at first and then heavy weapons in the first half of the 1970s was through Syria. Weapons came from Syria and from various sources, notably the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries and Arab countries. Third, the entry of Syrian troops and units of the Palestine Liberation Army stationed in Syria in 1975 at the request of Premier Karame and, in 1976, the entry of the Syrian army at the request of President Frangiyeh. Through its control over land access to Lebanon from the Arab interior and the inflow of weapons to the PLO, Syria was the 'pace-setter' of the war.²⁸ The warring factions, both Lebanese and Palestinian, were no match for Syria's armed forces, equipped and trained to fight Israel. At the origin of this chameleon-like conflict were two wars: the Arab defeat in 1967 and the Arab reaction to defeat in 1973. But the 1973 war, unlike in 1967, resulted in the inconclusive outcome of no victory and no defeat. Lebanon's war took place at a time when the Arab–Israeli–Palestinian conflict underwent radical transformation, prompted by Sadat's opening to the United States in 1974–75 and, by extension, to Israel. The two external parties most involved in the war, the PLO and Syria, were also the two Arab parties most directly involved in the Arab–Israeli conflict.

Egypt's 'desertion' of its wartime ally, Syria, after Sinai II placed the Palestinian ball in Syria's court. From then on, it was Asad's turn to find ways not only to play the risky Palestinian–Arab game, but also to be the

arbiter in the riskier Palestinian–Israeli game. Here lie the two major Palestinian miscalculations in the war. Arafat’s calculations in the war, like those of Jumblatt, were based on two faulty assumptions. One was that Syria’s military action in Lebanon would be deterred by Israel’s refusal to allow any drastic change in the military balance inside Lebanon. The other was that the Soviet Union would not allow a massive Syrian military intervention and would thus provide an effective counterweight favourable to the PLO.²⁹ Neither scenario materialised. Syria ignored Soviet advice and pressure. It acted in ways congruent with its political priorities and national interests.³⁰

Syria’s military intervention against the PLO was a move that gained Washington’s support and Israeli acquiescence.³¹ Washington gave Damascus a free hand in dealing with the PLO in Lebanon. By checking the PLO, Damascus was actually doing its bidding for American support. A calculated policy or a convenient coincidence, the Palestinian–Syrian war in Lebanon could be viewed as yet another battle in the unfinished 1973 war. Syria’s intervention in Lebanon was, in a way, a ‘sinai II’ disengagement of its own, though on the Palestinian–Israeli front. Lebanon became a de facto substitute territory traded for the unfinished wars of regional powers.

In the absence of Arafat’s grand schemes in the 1975–76 war, Syria would not have had sufficient justification to commit its armed forces to large scale warfare against the PLO. This is because internal conflict in Lebanon, involving only Lebanese parties, would not have constituted a threat to the Syrian regime. But a Lebanon controlled by a powerful Arafat-led PLO and backed by Arab regimes was an intolerable challenge to the Asad regime. The Syrian state would not subordinate its interests to a Palestinian revolution it claims to defend in the name of common Arab destiny and the struggle against Israel, and to a Palestinian people it claims to represent in the name of Arab nationalism.

In view of the complexity of the 1975–76 war, conflict could not have ended short of a decisive military victory of one of two parties that had the greatest military capabilities: Syria and the PLO. Military confrontations ended momentarily, but political conflict, involving internal and external parties, remained. Two years later war was resumed and was to continue for over a decade.

Notes

- 1 Mohsin Dalloul, *al-Wasat*, 10 March 1997, p. 35.
- 2 Interview with Mohsin Ibrahim, 6 March 1997.
- 3 Interview with George Hawi, 7 April 1997.
- 4 Mohsin Dalloul, *al-Wasat*, 10 March 1997, p. 36.
- 5 Interview with George Hawi, 7 April 1997.
- 6 Interview with Mohsin Ibrahim, 6 March 1997. Interview with 'Issam Na'man, 12 July 1996.
- 7 Interview with George Hawi, 7 April 1997.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Pakradouni, *La Paix Manquée...*, p. 45.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid., p. 48.
- 12 Ibid., p. 49.
- 13 Ibid., p. 53.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid., p. 52.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid., p. 60.
- 18 Ibid., p. 61.
- 19 For a detailed study of the Arab Deterrent Force, see Fouad Aoun, *Quwwat al-Rad' al'Arabiyya fi Lubnan: al-Wad' al-Qanuni wa al-Siyasi wa al-'Askari* (Beirut: n.p., 1989): 239–74.
- 20 Pakradouni, *La Paix Manquée...*, p. 54.
- 21 Aoun, *Quwwat al-Rad' ...*, pp. 242–3.
- 22 See Reuven Avi-Ran, *The Syrian Involvement in Lebanon Since 1975* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991): 69–79.
- 23 Pakradouni, *La Paix Manquée...*, pp. 87–9. See also Brynen, *Sanctuary...*, pp. 110–15.
- 24 Ibid., pp. 91–2.
- 25 Ibid., p. 92.
- 26 Aoun, *Quwwat al-Rad'...*, pp. 296–300.
- 27 See Melhem Chaoul, 'Le dispositif de la guerre au Liban. Fonction de réduction', in *Le Droit à la Mémoire* (collective work) (Beirut: Publications de la Fondation Libanaise pour la Paix Civile Permanente, 1988): 1–39. Chaoul argues that the 1975–76 war provided a well-controlled political and military 'space' for the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- 28 Interview with Mohsin Ibrahim, 6 March 1997.
- 29 Interview with George Hawi, 7 April 1997.
- 30 See liana Kass, 'Moscow and the Lebanese Triangle', *Middle East Journal* 33 (Spring 1979): 164–87; Avi-Ran, *The Syrian Involvement...*, pp. 55–8. For a general overview of Soviet involvement in the war, see Golan, *The Soviet Union...*, pp. 180–209. See also Robert O. Freedman, 'The Soviet Union and the Civil War in Lebanon 1975–76', *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 3, 4 (Summer 1978): 63–74.

[31](#) See Evron, *War and Intervention...*, pp. 45–56.

Part VIII

The Inevitable Breakdown

The PLO Armed Presence and its Impact on Lebanese Politics and Society

The writing on the PLO in Lebanon, both before and after the war, has been largely tendentious. Western observers in particular were willing to accept the Palestinian version of the story, partly because they were in contact with PLO leaders and their Lebanese supporters, and partly because they believed that the Palestinians had a just cause while their critics in Lebanon were usurping power and had no cause to defend, and even no reason to be alarmed by, the PLO armed presence. Two images are particularly revealing: at best, the PLO used force in Lebanon to protect Palestinian civilians and to support Lebanese allies; at worst, the PLO was caught in the fire and was thus driven into a war which it sought to avoid and in which it was little involved. The theme shared by these observers is best expressed by Edward Said's assertion that 'The PLO's destabilisation of Lebanon is a myth'.¹

While some writers made similar arguments through different approaches by emphasising Lebanon's internal contradictions, others depicted the PLO as being trapped in Lebanon's sectarian chaos.² Writing in the late 1980s, Rex Brynen argues that the PLO in Lebanon was always on the defensive and had repeatedly sought to avoid conflict with the Lebanese government by adopting strategies of restraint and communication.³ Phrases were coined to describe how the PLO was 'caught in the Lebanon net',⁴ and how Lebanon's tribal ways helped corrupt an otherwise pure and guiltless Palestinian revolution. In short, as Fateh leader Abu Iyad put it: 'we had no

intention of taking any power from the Lebanese authorities or even of interfering in their internal affairs.’⁵

There were also those who linked the war to a preconceived Maronite power game. One such argument attributes conflict to Maronite attempts to preserve political supremacy.⁶ Another argument relates the war to a Maronite design to partition Lebanon and create a ‘Christian Israel’.⁷ In a rather Active account, commentators picked up the story of a discussion between Israeli leaders in 1954 concerning the establishment of a separatist Maronite movement in Lebanon and read into it all kinds of conspiracy theories. Although Israeli leaders concluded that no such action was possible since, among other things, there was no contact between Israeli and Maronite leaders, and despite the fact that discussions among Israeli leaders were conducted without Maronite knowledge or involvement,⁸ it was viewed by some observers as the conclusive evidence uncovering the Maronite-Israeli ‘plot’ which began in the mid-1950s and culminated in the war in 1975.⁹ These arguments were aimed at playing down the PLO role first in the breakdown prior to 1975 and later during the war.

One of the most balanced and accurate characterisations of the PLO armed presence and its impact on Lebanese politics and society is that of the Palestinian scholar Walid Khalidi. In his words: The appearance of the Palestinian Resistance on Lebanese soil had many consequences. Objectively, it upset the Christian-Moslem balance of power in favour of the Moslems. It offered not only a model to the radicalised Moslems but also a protective umbrella against Maronite high-handedness. It initiated a period of unprecedented tension between Lebanon and Israel. It mobilised the Palestinian refugee camp populations, exacerbating friction with their Maronite neighbours and the Lebanese authorities. It created a new area of explosive discord inside Lebanese society on such issues as the legitimacy of the 1969 Cairo Agreement and the control of commando activity.

Israel’s retaliatory strategy had the following major consequences. It aroused general consternation concerning the territorial integrity of Lebanon. It created yet another area of explosive discord within Lebanese society regarding the army’s role in response to Israeli raids. It generated feelings of impotence and frustration within the ranks of the Lebanese army and security forces, paving the way for the polarisation between

their Christian and Moslem components. It produced havoc in the border areas largely inhabited by Shiites. This in turn hastened the exodus of the Shiite peasantry towards the shantytowns of Beirut, where these refugees provided a new source of friction with their Maronite neighbours as well as fertile soil for radicalisation directed against their own establishment and the system as a whole.¹⁰

PLO armed presence has fundamentally derailed the course of Lebanese politics and has deeply disrupted sectarian relations. It differs from other external interventions (or influences) in post-1943 Lebanon, both in form and substance, for the following reasons. First, because of the unique nature of the Palestinian problem as well as of the broader Arab-Israeli conflict. Second, because of the nature of the Arab state system and the changing regional balance of power following the 1967 war. Third, because of the nature of PLO entrenchment in Lebanon, particularly after the loss of its Jordan base.

While the Arab–Israeli–Palestinian conflict and regional politics since the 1967 war are not the focus of this study, they have a direct bearing on the political and military strategy of the PLO in Lebanon and, by extension, on its impact on state and society. This impact is visible at three levels: first, on the political system and the political process; second, on society, particularly on sectarian relations and the mobilisation process since 1969; third, on Lebanon’s external relations and place in regional politics.

At the level of internal politics, PLO armed presence was a powerful divisive force. It had a number of consequences. First, it radicalised Maronite opinion and united Maronite ranks. In the late 1950s, Nasserism did not split the country into two well-defined opposing camps whether along sectarian or ideological lines. President Chamoun, who led the opposition to Nasser, was faced by a strong Maronite opposition represented by Patriarch Méouchy and by Army commander Fouad Chehab. In the mid-1970s, by contrast, major Maronite leaders joined ranks to face what they perceived as a Palestinian threat to Lebanon’s survival as an independent state and to the physical and political security of the Christian community. The most notable Maronite ‘dissenter’ was Raymond Eddé. But while Eddé was on good terms with Arafat, many of his supporters joined

Christian militias or formed armed groupings of their own to fight PLO forces.¹¹

Second, the sheer size of the Palestinian community in Lebanon, which by the mid-1970s was approximately 400,000 (about 15 per cent of Lebanon's population), and its distinct confessional colouring (predominantly Sunni Muslim, particularly the camp dwellers) constituted an unprecedented demographic threat to the Christian community. Thus, with or without any political or military agenda associated with the Palestinians in Lebanon, Christians grew fearful of this new demographic reality. Indeed, in a country like Lebanon, made up of minority groups jealously guarding their communal turfs, the demographic size of the Palestinians was cause for concern, all the more so when many Christians perceived the Palestinians as the de facto allies of the Muslims. And with the Palestinians, demography has unusual features: an armed refugee population engaged in a war of national liberation. Obviously, this is not comparable to the repercussions of demographic and socio-economic problems associated with refugees in a number of Third World countries or with illegal immigrants in Western countries.

Third, the PLO brought about an unprecedented tactical alliance between the Sunni and Shia political and religious establishments and the Left. On the Muslim–Leftist bank of Lebanon's confessional river, the PLO was the water that flooded the river and severed bridges linking its two banks. The common denominator shared by the Muslim political establishment, the religious leadership and the Left was the unconditional support for the Palestinian Resistance. No other factor could have pulled together such an incompatible array of parties and leaders in the first half of the 1970s other than the 'Palestinisation' of Lebanese politics.

Fourth, the PLO brought together Leftist, pan-Arab and other nationalist parties to form a political coalition led by Kamal Jumblatt. Although the Leftist, Arab and Syrian nationalist parties that made up the Lebanese National Movement did not emerge as an organised and effective political force until the mid-1970s, the PLO was the driving force behind the creation of such a coalition of different political and ideological persuasions. While disagreeing on domestic issues, the major political

objective shared by the parties and groupings of the Lebanese National Movement was support to the PLO.¹²

The Undermining of the Consensual Political Process
The other destabilising effect linked to the PLO concerns the functioning of the confessional political process. One of the most pervasive aspects of PLO politics in Lebanon relates to the gradual erosion of the communal foundations of the 1943 National Pact insofar as it is based on a consensus derived from a working relationship between a politically moderate Maronite and Sunni elite.

On the Maronite side, the Palestinian bid for power had three effects: (i) it undermined the power and credibility of the presidency; (ii) it discredited the Lebanese army and opened the country to Israeli and, subsequently, to Syrian military intervention; (iii) it weakened Maronite influence vis-à-vis the Sunni political establishment and the Left but without providing a mechanism to restore balance in the system. The cumulative effect of these changes – two institutional in the presidency and the army, representing the two principal Maronite power centres, and the third political – was to curtail the power of the president as head of the executive and undercut his role as chief communal balancer in sectarian politics. These two roles, traditionally associated with the presidency, were neutralised by the de facto ‘confessionalisation’ of PLO politics.

On the Sunni side, the impact of PLO politics is much deeper. Although Palestinian, Sunni, and Leftist politics were intertwined with pan-Arab politics in ways which blurred the distinction between their varying influences on the political process, the rift between them appeared on the surface once the Maronite target ceased to be a unifying factor for these groups. This occurred in 1976, when Syria turned the tables against Jumblatt and Arafat, provoking a quick reshuffling of political alliances and widening the rift between Jumblatt and the Sunni leadership.

Two trends can be associated with Palestinian and Sunni politics. One is the customary pattern of Sunni pan-Arab politics. The other has to do with the political ascendancy of Jumblatt and the Left in the mid-1970s. In the 1970s, the PLO inherited Nasser's legacy, penetrated every aspect of Sunni politics and created leaders and symbols of its own.¹³ In comparison with the PLO in Lebanon, Nasserism was a mild influence on Sunni communal politics. Notwithstanding Egypt's role in the 1958 crisis, the most Nasser could do after 1958 was to support local leaders and sponsor Beirut-based newspapers against rival Arab regimes. The concrete manifestation of Egyptian influence was the special status that the Egyptian ambassador enjoyed in Beirut. The PLO, by contrast, had no embassy in Beirut but an armed force, which by 1976 was larger than the Lebanese army. PLO leaders addressing themselves to a large Palestinian refugee and non-refugee population in Lebanon and mobilised by a revolutionary discourse was a far cry from Nasser indulging in fiery rhetoric from Cairo.

Following the loss of its base in Jordan, the PLO sought to deepen (*ta'miq*) its alliances in Lebanon. For Fateh, the natural and most accessible group was the Sunni 'street', and for other Palestinian organisations it was the various Leftist and pan-Arab parties and groupings. While Fateh exercised significant influence over a large number of Lebanese supporters, one of the most visible outcomes of Fateh's policies was the sponsorship of radical Sunni counter-elites, dependent on Fateh for political, military and financial support. The al-Murabitun movement in Beirut led by Ibrahim Qoleilat and the 'Movement of 24 October' in Tripoli led by Faruq al-Muqaddam, in addition to other groupings in Beirut and Sidon,¹⁴ were practically the creation of Fateh. Their power and even their political *raison d'être* hinged on the extent to which they served as a local front for the PLO.¹⁵ Most affected by this pattern of PLO politics were Sunni traditional leaders. While they maintained close ties with Arafat, they were threatened from within as they found themselves increasingly dependent on the PLO, mainly Fateh, for political support.

If the Maronite and Sunni political establishments were adversely affected by PLO meddling in Lebanese politics, though in varying degrees and through different mechanisms, who benefited from this state of affairs? Leftist parties and particularly Kamal Jumblatt were the main beneficiaries

of the eclipse of Sunni and Maronite power. It was a two-way process: the PLO gave the Left a revolutionary facade; the Jumblatt-led Left, in turn, provided domestic political cover for the PLO.

The alliance between the Lebanese National Movement and the PLO was in line with a strategy pursued by Fateh after the Jordan war.¹⁶ It was also manifested in a Beirut-based organisation formed in 1973, the Arab Front for the Support of the Palestinian Resistance. Headed by Jumblatt, this umbrella organisation made up of 23 parties and organisations included representatives from several Arab countries. In a way, the Front was a pan-Arab version of the Lebanese National Movement, used by Fateh as a forum to criticise the Lebanese government and other Arab regimes.

Jumblatt stood to benefit from the PLO in at least four ways. First, direct political and military support, especially from Fateh, to Jumblatt and to the parties of the Lebanese National Movement. Second, PLO sponsorship of populist Sunni groups undermined the power of established Sunni leaders, Jumblatt's main rivals in Lebanon's pan-Arab politics. Jumblatt's influence peaked when he succeeded in bringing to the premiership, Rashid al-Solh, despite opposition by major Sunni leaders. Third, support by Palestinian organisations, particularly PFLP and DFLP, and by Arab regimes to several nationalist and Leftist parties strengthened Jumblatt's position as the supreme leader of the Left and widened his margin of manoeuvrability. Fourth, Jumblatt's alliance with the PLO enhanced his stature as an Arab-Leftist leader in Arab and international politics, notably vis-à-vis Moscow, the main international backer of all three: the PLO, the Left and Jumblatt.

Through the existing process of confessional politics, Jumblatt was not in a position to exert the kind of power he acquired in the first half of the 1970s. Nor was he able to do this in a short period of time, as was the case prior to 1975. In many ways, the PLO gave Jumblatt a shortcut to history and was the springboard enabling Jumblatt to make the great political leap in the mid-1970s. The PLO helped neutralise formidable obstacles inherent in Lebanon's political system, which under normal circumstances Jumblatt alone would have been unable to remove. In other words, what seemed difficult, if not impossible, within the framework of the confessional political process, became within Jumblatt's reach in a PLO-dominated Lebanon.

Clearly, the PLO did not create Jumblatt's *za'ama* status in Druze and Lebanese politics, nor was Jumblatt a mere client of the PLO. But if Jumblatt's communal Druze leadership was a privilege acquired by birth, the PLO was Jumblatt's entry ticket to a position of unprecedented influence in Lebanese politics. With his inherited Druze leadership, Jumblatt could insure a permanently secure place in confessional politics, and with the PLO shield he was able to bypass the system without jeopardising his communal legitimacy and his Druze power base. No other Lebanese politician, and certainly no Leftist politician, was in a position to turn an initially unfavourable historical communal situation into a political asset the way Kamal Jumblatt did – and in a period of a few years.¹⁷

Palestinian leaders, for their part, were content to have an ally of Jumblatt's stature. While the PLO had no problem securing allies in Lebanon, Jumblatt was the only leader capable of bringing together several radical parties into the political process and challenging the political establishment without fearing a sudden, drastic reversal in his political fortunes. Palestinian leaders and Jumblatt drew substantial mutual benefit from nearly eight years of close co-operation. But in the end, Jumblatt needed the PLO, particularly its military machine, to achieve political objectives more than the PLO needed him to dominate Lebanon.

Jumblatt, to be sure, helped 'Lebanise' PLO control, but in Lebanon's open and plural society he was not fully indispensable. But irrespective of the degree of Jumblatt's indispensability for the PLO, the cumulative effect of the Jumblatt-Palestinian connection resulted in a sharp decline of Sunni power. This in turn deeply shook the bases of Sunni–Maronite politics, which had constituted the backbone of confessional politics since independence. The weakening of the Sunni establishment, was also in part the outcome of Sunni communal politics. The 'cartel' that traditional Sunni leaders maintained to keep new aspirants to the premiership from reaching office was, in the end, counterproductive. The more rigid and closed the 'club of prime ministers' was, the more brittle it became, and thus the easier it was to break.¹⁸

What were the implications of these changes on the political process in the mid-1970s? The most visible outcome was the undermining of the communal, consensual basis of the National Pact. The power of both the

Maronite and Sunni political establishments declined in absolute terms: Maronite power vis-à-vis the PLO-backed Sunni establishment; and Sunni power vis-à-vis PLO-backed Jumblatt and the Left.

But as Maronite and Sunni power declined, the Jumblatt-led Left did not gain sufficient power to compensate for the loss of power on the part of the Maronite and Sunni establishments. Consequently, Jumblatt was not able to acquire sufficient control to make a successful bid for power, whether with Maronite or Sunni partnership, in a reconstituted National Pact – one which reflected the new power equation in the system. Maronite and Sunni loss of power did not translate into a commensurate increase in Jumblatt's power both as a Druze and Leftist leader. In times of crisis, communal power is not transferable. Nor was Jumblatt in a position to transform or even abolish the entire confessional structure and rule the country unopposed without Maronite or Sunni support. The outcome was deadlock, leading to a vacuum at the centre of power.

That Jumblatt was able to overcome communal obstacles was no guarantee of success, all the more so when the instrument of change is force, not the democratic process. If Jumblatt could prevail over Maronite and Sunni leaders, he could not prevail over those who helped make his bid for power possible: the PLO and, to a lesser extent, Syria (until 1975). Here lies Jumblatt's inescapable dilemma.¹⁹ Had he succeeded in removing the Sunni and Maronite obstacle, he could not remove the PLO and Syria.

In short, no Lebanese leader, political party, or community could have altered the course of Lebanese politics in such a drastic way more than the PLO. Following the end of hostilities by the end of 1976, the PLO filled the vacuum created by the defeat of Jumblatt and by the increasing erosion of a Sunni role in Lebanese politics. The PLO emerged as the de facto 'partner' of the Maronite community in a fragmented post-1976 Lebanon.

As for the impact of the PLO on other communities, particularly on Shia politics, it differed from that of Maronite and Sunni politics. The PLO armed presence, especially in the south, helped radicalise the Shia community (examined later). But the role of the Shia in communal politics in the first half of the 1970s was less central to the political process than Sunni-Maronite and Sunni-Jumblatt politics. The Shia did not acquire decisive influence as a communal political force until after the 1975–76

war. In the first half of the 1970s, Musa al-Sadr's close ties with Syrian president Asad enabled him to play an intermediary role between Damascus and the Christian and Muslim establishments at various stages of the war.

The Radicalising Effect of the PLO and the Militarisation of Society Thus far we have discussed the impact of the PLO on the political process and communal politics. We now turn to the effect that the PLO military presence had on Lebanese society.

First, beginning in 1968 PLO guerrillas turned south Lebanon into a war zone. Prior to that, there were no systematic military confrontations between Lebanon and Israel since the signing of the Armistice agreement in 1949. In the absence of PLO warfare no such confrontations were likely to take place in the late 1960s. Having no occupied territories to liberate, the Lebanese state had no reason to engage in war against Israel. Nor was Israel eager to capture land in south Lebanon: a year or two after the 1967 war, Israel controlled more land than even the most zealous and militant Zionist could have imagined. In the late 1960s, Israel was busy fighting a costly war of attrition with Egypt and Syria; it was not eager to engage in military confrontations on a third front in south Lebanon.

Second, in the same vein, once the border area in the south was turned into a permanent front-line between Israel and the PLO, warfare was bound

to spread to other parts of the country, including Beirut and other major cities. Israel had no reason or justification to conduct massive military operations in Lebanon's cities and villages in the absence of the snowballing effect of PLO warfare. Lebanon's 19,000-strong armed forces in the pre-war period and modest military arsenal were no threat to Israel's powerful army.

Israel missed no opportunity to destabilise Lebanon and hurt its interests. Its indiscriminate raids went beyond acts of retaliation, and spared no civilian target. But Israeli action was in response to an initial PLO provocation; its principal target and strategic foe was the PLO and not Lebanon. In fact, it took Israel ten years of continuous confrontations with the PLO to carry out its first large scale invasion in 1978, and to have its army reach Tyre and then retreat after establishing a security zone. And it took Israel a further four years to launch its massive and more damaging invasion of 1982, and to have its army reach Beirut and surrounding areas. It also took important changes within Israel (leading to the Likud Party's first term of office in 1977) to opt for such grand military schemes. Had Israel's objective been the control of the Litani River, as is customarily claimed,²⁰ Israel reached its supposed target twice, in 1978 and 1982. However, Israel's main target and strategic objective in Lebanon was the elimination of the PLO military and political infrastructure. All other objectives were a function of Israeli attempts to weaken the PLO, rather than because Israel had pre-set expansionist schemes developed prior to the late 1960s and irrespective of PLO armed presence in Lebanon.

Third, the militarisation of Lebanese society, which began in the late 1960s and accelerated after 1973, was a direct outcome of the PLO. Those Lebanese groups, which took up arms, did so for two opposing reasons: in self-defence from a perceived PLO threat, or in support of the PLO and the armed struggle. No Lebanese group – whether a Christian-based party, Leftist party or Muslim-based party was in a position to engage in organised warfare in the absence of the PLO. The political and military demarcation line separating these groups reflected their divergent positions towards the PLO.

The turning point for the militarisation of society was the confrontation between the PLO and the Lebanese Army in 1973. From then on, Lebanese

groups began to acquire heavy weapons and to engage in organised military training.²¹ For Christian groups, military preparedness was deemed necessary to face an increasingly powerful PLO, especially when the government failed to enforce agreements signed with the PLO, and when the Army had no political cover to intervene, as in 1969 and 1973. For Muslim groups and Leftist parties, they were trained and armed by the PLO, mainly by Fateh. For some, their involvement with the PLO was part and parcel of the armed struggle against Israel. For others the armed struggle was also directed against Lebanon's 'reactionary' regime accused of being engaged in 'American-backed designs' against the Palestinian Resistance.

What facilitated the militarisation of society and greatly amplified it was the presence of fifteen Palestinian camps and a large number of bases of political and military activity scattered across the country. It looked as if there was a 'Palestinian revolution' for some, a 'Palestinian problem' for others, throughout Lebanon: in its major cities, five provinces, urban and rural areas and in rich and poor localities, inhabited by all communities.

In the absence of the PLO, Lebanese groups were not engaged in an ongoing war. Prior to the first major organised political move in support of the PLO (the demonstration of 23 April 1969), there were no acute political and social crises in Lebanon. Similarly, on the eve of the war Lebanese groups were not mobilised and bent on political violence to remove an oppressive regime. As explained in previous chapters, Lebanon was not ripe for a large scale armed conflict in the late 1960s and first half of the 1970s because of domestic problems, political and otherwise.

Fourth, the Shia were the most affected by PLO military activities both as a group and as individual inhabitants of south Lebanon. Beginning in the late 1960s, Shia political mobilisation under the leadership of Musa al-Sadr, would have been less destabilising, both for the Shia and for the country, had it occurred in the absence of the PLO factor in Lebanese politics. The forced displacement of Shia civilians from the south to Beirut's suburbs and the socio-economic problems it generated was the outcome of PLO-Israeli warfare in the south. Otherwise, migration to the city, from the south or from other rural areas, would have taken place at a much slower pace and would have been less politicised and divisive. It is one thing to blame

government authorities for failing to develop the south and improve the lot of the Shia, as Musa al-Sadr did in the 1970s, but it is another to associate Shia deprivation with Palestinian deprivation of national rights.

PLO-Israeli military operations in the south gave Shia deprivation a security dimension: that of government failure to protect the civilian population. Thus to the communal agenda of deprivation, a new security dimension was added to the list of Shia grievances. And it was this dimension which justified the formation of the Shia militia Amal and legitimised its presence. For Fateh, the training and arming of Amal was intended to stop Israeli aggression in the south. In short, had south Lebanon not become a war zone, Shia communal politics in the 1970s would have been different both in form and substance. Similarly, Shia political mobilisation would have been more orderly. As a result, Shia grievances would have been far more manageable.

Fifth, PLO armed presence had a radicalising effect on Lebanese society at all political, ideological and social levels. It created a pattern of rising expectations of change, a 'revolutionary situation' (*hala thawriyya*) which made some Lebanese believe, particularly in Leftist circles, that war would lead to a drastic change. Thus by 'revolutionising' (*tathwir*) society, the confessional system would crumble because of its inherent internal contradictions. This political psychology of 'ideological myth making',²² was very much the product of PLO revolutionary politics. This is not to say, of course, that prior to the coming of the PLO, political and ideological differences in Lebanon were non-existent. But what the PLO did was to generate an unprecedented simultaneous pattern of accelerated communal and ideological mobilisation.

The PLO and its Effect on Lebanon's External Relations After independence, external intervention peaked in the 1958 crisis. But in the 1960s, Lebanon's relations with the Arab countries were largely orderly. This was partly due to Lebanon's close ties with Cairo.²³ In the 1970s, however, Arab

intervention underwent change. Arab regimes now had a triple agenda in Lebanon: an internal Lebanese agenda, as was the case before the PLO entry to Lebanon, a Palestinian agenda along with all its political and ideological variants, and an inter-Arab agenda which reflected inter-Arab rivalries and the power politics of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In Lebanon and in other Arab countries, the pan-Arab nature of the Palestinian problem meant built-in intervention by no fewer than six Arab regimes: Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Of these countries, Syria had the greatest influence in Lebanon and was the most directly involved. Sharing borders with Lebanon and controlling its land access to the Arab interior, post-1967 Syria had at least three reasons to broaden its political and military intervention in Lebanon: to have access to the PLO, to neutralise intervention in Lebanese and Palestinian politics by Arab regimes, and to have a say in the Palestinian-Israeli dimension of the conflict.

Damascus has always sought to influence Lebanese politics, but its influence prior to the mid-1970s was limited. Syrian influence peaked in the late 1950s, but greatly diminished in the 1960s. The turning point for Syria's intervention in Lebanon, however, was the post-1967 PLO. Beginning in the late 1960s, the vast majority of PLO guerrillas entered Lebanon illegally from Syrian territory. As early as 1968–69, the Syrian-sponsored Sa'iqa was active in the south region and was assisted by Syrian troops.

Syria's qualitative breakthrough in its interventionist policy in Lebanon came following the PLO-Lebanese army confrontations in 1973. Syria's response to these events was the closure of its borders with Lebanon for over two months to put pressure on the Lebanese government to prevent military action against the PLO. Although Syria had a hidden agenda concerning bilateral Lebanese-Syrian relations,²⁴ its interventionist policy in 1973 was linked to the PLO, not to domestic Lebanese politics. At this

time, Syria was helping neither to end civil war in Lebanon nor to reform the political system. Nor was Syria seeking to Arabise Lebanon and neutralise Israeli influence. In the pre-war period, the PLO provided the entry ticket for Syria's gradual intervention in Lebanon.

The outbreak of war led to an unprecedented Syrian military intervention. It took a full-fledged war for Damascus to dispatch its army to Lebanon and to engage in fighting against PLO forces. In 1973, Syria intervened politically in defence of the PLO. In 1976, it intervened militarily against the PLO, in defence of Syrian interests. Following the failure of the Syrian-sponsored Constitutional Document in early 1976 and the military escalation by PLO-Leftist forces, Syria sought to prevent a PLO military victory in Lebanon which in turn would have been damaging to the Syrian regime. Such an outcome would have had several consequences.

First, it would provide an invitation for Israeli military intervention which, in turn, would draw Syria into a war not of its own making. Second, it would constitute a security threat to the survival of the minority-based Alawite regime. Third, PLO military victory in Lebanon would not have been possible without Arab support. Two Arab regimes were most willing to invest in Syria's defeat in Lebanon in 1976: Egypt and the Ba'thist regime in Iraq. Thus a PLO-dominated Lebanon supported by Egypt and Iraq as well as by other Arab regimes would have been a sure recipe for the destabilisation of the Asad regime.

Successive Syrian regimes attempted to coerce Lebanon into a position of conformity with their regional policies and to call into question the very existence of the Lebanese state. This was clearly reflected in Syria's consistent refusal to establish formal diplomatic relations with Lebanon ever since the two countries gained independence in the mid-1940s. Syria has also made claims to Lebanon on historical and ideological grounds. But to make claims and put pressure on a neighbouring country is one thing; to send an army into that country is another. Syria's claims were translated into military action in 1976; they materialised and were politically legitimised only when the PLO constituted a threat to Syria's interests and security.

Another consequence of the PLO presence in Lebanon had to do with its damaging effect on Lebanon's place in regional politics. Prior to the late 1960s, internal Lebanese politics had little political significance for the

major powers. But when Lebanon became the major base for the PLO, particularly after the Jordan war, it became of much greater interest to the major powers. In the absence of the PLO in Lebanon, the two superpowers had no reason to use Lebanon as a proxy territory for the unfinished Arab-Israeli conflict in the aftermath of the 1973 war. As Theodor Hanf indicated, Lebanon was a 'surrogate battlefield for Palestine'.²⁵ 'The developments in the region,' explained Hanf, 'whether towards war or peace, were all to its disadvantage. Since 1968 a Palestinian-Israeli war has been fought on Lebanese territory. Fierce armed conflicts in 1969 and 1973 may be classified as surrogate war over Palestine. But at this time there was no domestic civil war in Lebanon.'²⁶ The PLO factor gave internal Lebanese politics – the stage – regional importance but marginalised the Lebanese state – the theatre.

In a PLO-free Lebanon some of the above-mentioned developments would not have occurred, while others would not have unfolded the way they did. The PLO presence undermined consensual politics, paralysed the functioning of the confessional political process and crippled the Maronite-Sunni balancing role at the centre, though without providing a viable political counterweight. It also turned south Lebanon into a war zone, militarised society, polarised sectarian relations, radicalised public opinion and opened Lebanon to unprecedented political and military interventions by Israel, Syria and other Arab countries.

The PLO factor forced all conflictual internal issues not to the negotiating table but to the street. Under different circumstances, Lebanon's domestic problems would not have surfaced simultaneously and gained the urgency they did in the mid-1970s. Most destabilising for Lebanon was not only the occurrence of these developments, but the fact that this accelerated change took place, not in one or two generations, but in a period of only five to six years.

The PLO in Lebanon: From 'Tawrit' to Take-Over

Given this state of affairs, the question to be asked is what PLO action in Lebanon was planned policy and

what was due to the momentum of armed conflict after 1967?

With the best of intentions on the part of PLO leaders, the mere existence of a revolutionary movement, drawing support from a power base of thousands of armed refugees, was destabilising. This is particularly the case in a country with a competitive political process where elections are held on a regular basis and political differences are voiced in a free press. But the PLO, of course, was not a passive actor.

In the late 1960s, the PLO's major achievement was 'self-determination' in the camps. In subsequent years, the 'self-determination' concept was broadened far beyond the camps and their vicinities. PLO strategy after Jordan aimed at deepening its political and military presence while broadening popular support. Palestinian leaders believed that, had they enjoyed the support of the people in Jordan, they would not have lost the war.²⁷

Drawing on a large reserve of Lebanese support for the Palestinian cause, and taking full advantage of Lebanon's openness and divisions, Palestinian organisations penetrated Lebanon's political, economic and social life. Institutions of civil society – political parties, labour unions, the press, student organisations and local organisations in various parts of the country – were targeted by the PLO. Attempts were made to influence these institutions and, when possible, to control them. Large sums of money, weapons, training and other incentives were offered to attract supporters and neutralise critics.²⁸ The oil boom, following the 1973 war, came in handy to increase the PLO's financial resources as well as those of Arab regimes, notably Libya and Iraq, engaged in similar, though more limited, activities in Lebanon.

When the war broke out, the PLO had a massive political and military infrastructure throughout the country.²⁹ While PLO involvement in the war has been discussed in other chapters,³⁰ suffice it to say here that in 1975–76 the PLO had made full recovery from the Jordan war – to the point that it was duplicating the Jordanian experience in Lebanon. Though a slogan, Abu Iyad's famous assertion that the road to Palestine passed through Lebanon³¹ was indicative of the PLO leadership's mindset in the war.

PLO policy and action in Lebanon received support from all Palestinian leaders and organisations. Whether before or during the war no measure was taken by any PLO official in opposition to the prevailing PLO policy, and no dissenting voice was heard which questioned PLO policy and conduct in Lebanon, at least openly. The only open disagreement, specifically within the Fateh leadership, was over its dealings with Syria, but only after the latter clashed with Fateh in 1976. Otherwise, for the PLO leadership, political and military action in Lebanon was business as usual.

The post-war phase of PLO armed presence, extending from 1977 to 1982–83 (not covered in this book), was the golden era for the post-1967 PLO. It was characterised by significant political and diplomatic achievements. The Lebanon era of the PLO ended only when it lost its protective shield as it found itself in a head-on collision with Israel.

Realising that it reached the end of the line with Israel, and afraid of losing its ‘lifetime’ investment in Lebanon, the PLO suddenly became a law-abiding institution. For the first time, Palestinian organisations of all persuasions were willing to abide by an American-negotiated cease-fire with Israel in 1981. The PLO behaved like weak states do when faced by the strong. In practice, this meant not giving Israel a pretext to invade – precisely what the Lebanese state had tried but failed to do ever since the late 1960s because it could not prevent the PLO from giving Israel similar pretexts. The Lebanese state failed in 1969 and the PLO failed in 1982, though for different reasons. PLO military presence ended effectively not when Palestinian leaders were forced out of Beirut by Israel in September 1982, but when Arafat was forced out of Tripoli by Syrian troops in 1983.

One theme often repeated in accounts of the PLO is the notion of its nonintervention in internal Lebanese affairs. Although Fateh claimed that it was committed to this policy, the difference between Fateh’s ‘non-interventionist’ stand and the position of other guerrilla organisations was a function of their different political and ideological approaches to immediate and long term objectives. What made Fateh look more willing to pursue a policy of ‘non-intervention’ was the conduct of other organisations: the more militant non-Fateh organisations were, the more ‘law-abiding’ Fateh looked in comparison.

The notion of ‘non-intervention’ in the affairs of Arab countries is one of the most overlooked aspects of Fateh’s strategy in Lebanon. In a revealing

interpretation of Fateh's strategy in Arab politics and Arab-Palestinian relations written after the Jordan war, Hani al-Hassan, one of Arafat's senior advisers, distinguished between non-intervention in the local (*mahalli*) affairs of an Arab country, as opposed to non-intervention in its internal (*dakhiliyya*) affairs.³² While stressing that Fateh would not intervene in the local affairs of an Arab country – that is, it would not seek to overthrow an Arab regime – al-Hassan would not rule out intervention in the domestic affairs of host countries. This was justified, according to al-Hassan, on the grounds that the definition of 'local' affairs applied only to the regime, and not to the people. Thus instead of actively seeking to topple an Arab regime, Fateh would influence the people who, in turn, would move against the existing political order. In practice, this was a refined version of the policy of *tawrit* (to implicate), but this was *tawrit* from below targeting the masses and not directly the regime. Needless to say, the ideal place for such a scenario is where people are free to organise politically and take an open stand on pan-Arab issues, notably on the Palestinian cause. Lebanon was peerless in this regard.

Moreover, commenting on the PLO's experience of 'coexistence' (*ta'ayush*) with Arab regimes, Fateh member of the Revolutionary Council, Naji 'Alloush, stressed that the notion of 'non-intervention in the internal affairs of Arab States' was a 'tactical slogan'.³³ It was needed, 'Alloush continued, in the formative years of the revolution when the PLO was weak and was thus unable to shield itself from aggression by Arab regimes. But as the PLO was able to build military and political capabilities through a process of 'cumulative authority' (*tarakum al-sulta*), the policy of non-intervention was dropped.³⁴ Instead, an offensive policy was pursued, as was the case in Jordan, where the ultimate objective was 'final liberation' of the country,³⁵ the toppling of the regime and the establishment of a 'national authority'.³⁶

If that was true in Jordan, it was no less true in Lebanon. If the Jordanian regime was 'imperialist', Lebanon's was 'imperialist' and 'confessional', hence more reason to 'liberate' it. This self-proclaimed mission of redemption was ingrained in Fateh's strategy and self-image. According to Hani al-Hassan, the Palestinian revolution, 'the historical cause' of the Arab nation, was the embodiment of the 'liberation struggle' within Arab

countries.³⁷ This was the essence of Fateh's 'revolutionary struggle' against the 'reactionary and feudal forces' within each Arab country.³⁸ With such an endeavour to rid Arab regimes of their ills, the PLO saw itself as a 'substitute' for the Arab liberation movement.³⁹

In a scathing criticism of the political thought of the PLO following the Jordan war, Sadiq Jalal al-'Azm argues that the PLO had little understanding of the reasons of its Jordan defeat.⁴⁰ By attributing defeat to 'external factors' and to a 'series of minor events and insignificant details', PLO leaders sought to evade responsibility for the defeat and, by implication, for the need to rethink its revolutionary action and organisational structure.⁴¹ In so doing, the PLO acted no differently from Arab regimes in the aftermath of the 1967 defeat.⁴²

In Lebanon, where the PLO was more entrenched and was fighting an easier battle with the Lebanese state, it had no reason to learn from its Jordan experience. The PLO was able to impose 'temporary coexistence' (*ta'ayush mu'aqqat*)⁴³ until war broke out. The 'secure base' (*al-qa'ida al-amina*), defined as 'the place where revolutionaries exercise total authority',⁴⁴ was insured in Lebanon as early as 1969.

Ever since it was formed, the PLO, to be sure, had no autonomous territorial base from which to operate. Nor was it autonomous politically. This was the case in pre-1967 Jordanian-controlled West Bank, as well as in Jordan after 1967. This has been the PLO's existential predicament prior to its Lebanon experience.

Once in Lebanon, the PLO was neither hostage to policies and actions pursued by the Lebanese government nor was the PLO forced to alter its strategy of armed struggle to survive politically and militarily. It sought occasional tactical communication with the Lebanese government, but could not be restrained, especially in the south, its military headquarters. In practice, the PLO went beyond Fateh's policy of *tawrit* to a policy of take-over in 1976.

If Arab regimes never refrained from intervening in each other's internal affairs, including Lebanon's, why would the PLO behave differently? Whether it was *tawrit* or self-help, the PLO was bound by no limits to achieve its objectives; the more power the PLO gained, the more militant it became. This is best expressed by Fateh leader Abu Jihad. For him, ...

every Arab regime around our occupied territories is responsible for our tragedy, and they have a duty to let us have our chance to liberate our country because they are responsible.... They must pay the price of their crime against our people and their share in creating our tragedy ... by giving us permission to be there, to work to organise ourselves and to prepare ourselves for returning to our homeland. For that we consider that every Palestinian border country must be a base for our people.⁴⁵

Therefore, collective Arab and political responsibility for the Palestinian tragedy justifies Palestinian ends and means. There is an element of truth in Shafiq al-Hout's characterisation of Lebanon as a garden without a fence.⁴⁶ But it is equally true that not all gardens need fences, especially when next door's gardens are also fenceless. Lebanon's predicament, however, was that it had the only open 'garden' in the midst of Arab 'gardens' sealed by concrete walls.

Lebanon and the PLO: Mirror Image To borrow Clifford Geertz's description of the subtle junction between religion and culture, the PLO was 'holding' Lebanon and was 'held' by it.⁴⁷ It is of no small significance that it was only in Lebanon's odd setting that the post-1967 PLO was able to gain an autonomous presence.

Lebanon, having the Arab world's quintessential 'reactionary' regime – as claimed by Arab leaders and regimes as well as by the PLO – was the PLO's last refuge. That a Palestinian revolutionary movement embodying the Arab world's most 'sacred cause', could grow and prosper amidst Lebanon's 'polluted' sectarian space was no minor indication of the ideological and political bankruptcy of pan-Arab politics in the post-1967 phase of the Arab–Israeli conflict. Arab support for the PLO was greatest, so long as the PLO was based in Lebanon: that is, outside Arab countries.

Lebanon was also an ideal place for a factionalised movement such as the PLO. In a way, the PLO was a mirror image of Lebanese society. Both the

mainstream organisations Fateh and the radical groups were at home in Lebanon. Revolutionary and Arab nationalist by necessity, conservative and Palestinian nationalist by conviction,⁴⁸ Fateh shared a significant degree of political and cultural affinity with Lebanon's Sunni political establishment. Similarly, the radical organisations had ideological partners and 'sister organisations' of their own among Lebanese Leftist parties. As for Palestinian factions loyal to rival Syrian and Iraqi Ba'thist regimes (Sa'iqa and the Arab Liberation Army), they joined ranks with the Lebanese branches of the two factions of the Ba'th Party. What Lebanon offered to the PLO, particularly in terms of political and ideological diversity, would not have been found in other Arab countries.

To the extent that Fateh represented a wide range of Palestinian and Arab interests, it was vulnerable to external influences. Like Lebanon in the Arab state system, Fateh within the PLO had to reconcile contradictory interests, contain destabilising external influences, and maintain minimal internal cohesion to walk the tightrope of Arab politics. Fateh in Arab politics was the most 'Lebanised' organisation within the PLO. But in pan-Arab politics, the PLO, despite its fragmentation and vulnerability, had the upper-hand in Lebanon – and ironically, because of Lebanon. Once the PLO was forced out of Lebanon in 1982–83, it lost much of the power it acquired. It became no less vulnerable to destabilising external influences and exploitation by Arab regimes than Lebanon.

Notes

- 1 Edward W. Said, 'Our Lebanon', *The Nation*, 18 February 1984, pp. 180–1.
- 2 See Petran, *The Struggle...*, pp. 142–84; Robert Fisk, *Pity The Nation: Lebanon At War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Randal, *Going All The Way...*, pp. 61–108; David Gilmour, *Lebanon, The Fractured Country* (London: Sphere Books, 1983): 86–96; Eric Rouleau, *Les Palestiniens. D'une Guerre à l'Autre* (Paris: Editions La Découverte et Le Monde, 1984): 126–41. Hussein Sirriyyeh, 'The Palestinian Armed Presence in Lebanon since 1967', in Roger Owen, (ed.), *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon...*, pp. 73–89; Samih K. Farsoun and Rex B. Wingerter, 'Palestinians in Lebanon', *SAIS Review*, 2 (Winter 1981): 93–106. For another treatment, see Michael C. Hudson, 'The Palestinian Factor in the Lebanese Civil War', *Middle East Journal* 32 (Summer 1978): 261–78.
- 3 Brynen, *Sanctuary...*, pp. 159–78.
- 4 Cobban, *The Palestinian...*, pp. 58–107.
- 5 Abu Iyad, *My Home...*, p. 163.
- 6 See, for example, Talal Shahin, 'Al-Mufajjir al-Ra'isi Lilsira' fi Lubnan wa Tabi'at alTabaqa al-Kumbraduriya al-Hakima', *Shu'un Filastiniyya*, (March 1976): 6–30. Khalid Jabir, 'Al-Tawazunat al-Musallaha (2): Hawl Intikhabat al-Ri'sa fi Lubnan', *Shu'un Filastiniyya* 58 (June 1976): 5–17.
- 7 See Elaine C. Hagopian, 'Redrawing the Map in the Middle East: Phalangist Lebanon and Zionist Israel', *Arab Studies Quarterly* 5 (Fall 1983): 321–36; Samih Farsoun, 'Toward a Maronite Zion', *MERIP Reports*, No. 44 (1976): 15–18.
- 8 For a balanced account of the exchange of letters between David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett, see Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon...*, pp. 161–73.
- 9 See, for example, Randal, *Going All the Way...*, pp. 186–242.
- 10 Khalidi, *Conflict...*, p. 94.
- 11 For example, in the Dikwaneh region near the Tal-Za'tar camp, Eddé's supporters, led by the so-called Bash Maroun, took up arms.
- 12 Interview with Raghid al-Solh, 5 April 1996. On the Lebanese National Movement's parties and organisations, see Sami Zubyan, *Al-Haraka al-Wataniyya al-Lubnaniyya: alMadi, wa al-Hadir, wa al-Mustaqbal Min Manzur Istratiji* (Beirut: Dar al-Masira, 1977): 121–326.
- 13 Interview with George Hawi, 7 April 1997.
- 14 See Zubyan, *Al-Haraka...*, pp. 232–97. Interview with George Hawi, 7 April 1997.
- 15 Following the departure of PLO forces from Beirut and Tripoli in 1982–83, these groups ceased to operate and their leaders were forced out of the country.
- 16 See al-Hassan, 'Fateh...', pp. 9–21.
- 17 See Farid el Khazen, 'Kamal Jumblatt...', pp. 185–205.
- 18 The prime example was the resignation of designated premier Amin al-Hafiz in 1973 in the face of opposition by the Sunni political establishment. This widened Jumblatt's margin of maneuverability and gave him greater influence in Sunni cabinet politics.
- 19 See the account of Jumblatt's characterisation of Lebanese communities in Nawaf Salam, *Mythes et Politiques Au Liban* (Beirut: Editions FMA, 1987): 41–79.
- 20 See, for example, Petran, *The Struggle...*, pp. 305–6.

- 21 Prior to 1973, military preparations were neither organised nor continuous. Organised military activities, involving mobilisation of the youth, serious training and the acquisition of heavy weapons began in 1973. This was confirmed by many sources.
- 22 See Kishli, *Naqd al-Hayat...*, pp. 114–18.
- 23 See Michel Abu Jawdeh, *Al 'Arabi al-Ta'ih wa al-Sanawat al-Yatima* (Beirut: Dar alNahar, 1993): 13–141.
- 24 Chapter 15: The Year of Living Dangerously, 1973, pp. 203–217.
- 25 Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon...*, p. 175.
- 26 Ibid., p. 178.
- 27 Interview with Shafiq al-Hout, 14 August 1994.
- 28 There are no accurate figures on the amount of money that was spent by the PLO (and by Arab regimes who supported the PLO). Millions of dollars were spent and recipients were in the thousands. The PLO also received large contributions from the Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. As for the training of Lebanese who were active with the PLO or with other pro-PLO parties in the period 1969–75, the number is estimated between ten and fifteen thousand. This information was gathered from conversations with several interviewees familiar with PLO activities in Lebanon.
- 29 See Part VII, Chapter 16: The Aftershocks of the 1973 War and Lebanese Politics, 1974, pp. 226–31.
- 30 See Lebanon's Multifaceted War: 1975–76, pp. 284–358.
- 31 *Al-Safir*, 24 May 1976. See also Norman F. Howard, 'Tragedy in Lebanon', *Current History*, vol. 72, No. 423 (January 1977): 3.
- 32 Hani al-Hassan, 'Fateh Bayn al-Nazariyya wa al-Tatbiq, al-Itar al-Nazari. Part I, *Shu'un Filastiniyya* (March 1972): 9–21.
- 33 Naji 'Alloush, 'Nahwa Istratijiyya Jadida Lilhawra al-Filastiniyya', *Dirasat 'Arabiyya* 7 (February 1971): 10–11.
- 34 Ibid., p. 11.
- 35 Ibid., p. 14.
- 36 Ibid., p. 15.
- 37 Al-Hassan, 'Fateh...', pp. 14–15.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Sadeq Jalal al-'Azm, *Dirasa Naqdiyya Lifikr al-Muqawama al-Filastiniyya* (Beirut: Dar al-'Awda, 1973): 32.
- 40 Ibid., p. 61 and pp. 61–77.
- 41 Ibid., pp. 61–2. See also another critical work on the PLO experience in Jordan by Husam al-Khatib, *Fi al-Tajriba al-Thawriyya al-Filastiniyya* (Damascus: n.p. 1972).
- 42 Al-'Azm, *Dirasa...*, p. 61.
- 43 'Alloush, 'Nahwa... p. 13.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Cited in Brynen, *Sanctuary...*, p. 46. See also the views of PLO leaders on Lebanese communities in Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon...*, pp. 416–41.
- 46 Al-Hout, *Ushrun 'Aman...*, p. 185.

- 47 Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed. Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968): 56–89.
- 48 It is interesting to compare the readings of the role and achievements of the PLO by two Palestinian observers of PLO politics, Khalid al-Hassan and Walid Khalidi. While Khalidi stresses the pan-Arab orientation of the Palestinian struggle, al-Hassan indicates that the ‘first achievement’ of the resistance movement was to reestablish a Palestinian identity. See Walid Khalidi, ‘Thinking the Unthinkable: A Sovereign Palestinian State’, *Foreign Affairs* 4 (July 1978): 695–713. For al-Hassan’s Comments, see Cobban, *The Palestinian...*, p. 245.

Conflicting Images of the State and its Structural Dichotomy

In pre-war Lebanon the state served, in a way, as a buffer zone between communities. When that role ended in the mid-1970s, the state was inactive. And when war broke out, the state was not a party to the war. It quickly disintegrated into communal domains, as did the army. What was once *raison d'état* disintegrated into *raisons de communautés*. It was only after war ended in the autumn of 1976 that the state was able to re-emerge, but it was weaker and more vulnerable than prior to the outbreak of war.

Perceptions of the Over-inflated Power of the State
Conflicting images of the state have permeated the entire political spectrum. For Maronite leaders, the state was the last line of communal defence. What others saw in presidential power, Maronite hegemony, the Maronites saw as a vulnerable defensive shield, needed more for political security than for domination. In crises involving the PLO, whatever power the Maronite president had, it was

paralysed, as was the decision-making process from 1969 to 1975.

For Sunni leaders, the state was viewed as subject to presidential authority. Presidential power was more contested in crises involving pan-Arab issues than in relation to domestic issues. Sunni leaders sought to enhance the power of the prime minister vis-à-vis the president. The purpose was not to make government decisions more effective, nor to strengthen the position of the government vis-à-vis the PLO. Rather, it was to have a greater share in the political pie and to enhance the premier's veto power. Therefore, redressing the power equation in the executive would not necessarily translate into upholding the state prerogative to resort to instruments of legitimate coercion. Paradoxically, this meant that more power would result in more government paralysis in the absence of internal consensus on the disputed issues.

The Shia community, for its part, was, prior to 1975, in the midst of a communal transition. Musa al-Sadr initiated a new pattern of Shia political activism and blamed the state for Shia deprivation. On the surface, Sadr's platform was social and economic, but in essence it was political. While before the war the Shia exercised less veto power than the Maronites and the Sunni, they were nonetheless beneficiaries of the post-1920 state and its institutions. Lacking communal institutions of their own, in comparison with other communities, the Shia relied on the state for social advancement and on the political system for communal recognition. In this way, the Sadr platform in the pre-war period was the most state-centred in comparison with that of other communities.

As for Leftist parties, images of the state were the product of an ideological reading of Lebanese history, politics and society. For the Left, Lebanon's confessional order made the political system structurally deficient while its *laissez faire* economy resulted in monopolistic practices, accelerated by dependence on American dominated world capitalism.¹ Therefore, Lebanon's reactionary confessional system, capitalism and isolationist tendencies had to be scrapped.

This reading reflected imported images of the state: of its power and role in society. Two models stood out as particularly revealing: Western and

Arab. The Western model was mainly that of the French state: omnipotent, centralised with vast resources and a strong extractive and distributive power. The other model was that of the Arab state: the authoritarian, repressive state for some, and the revolutionary, progressive and nationalist state for others. Compared with either model, the state in Lebanon looked backward and deficient in the eyes of Leftist leaders and ideologues. For some, it was repressive. For others, it was reactionary. For still others it failed to promote equality and justice. In short, the state failed to deliver on all counts.

For all parties – Christian, Muslim and Leftist – the image was that of a state with over-inflated power, but one which failed to act as a state, for reasons which differed from one group to another. The image of a strong state gave all parties something to work towards. For the Christians, the aim was to strengthen the state by not relinquishing constitutional power. For the Muslims, it was to redress grievances and enhance their power. For the Left, it was to transform the system altogether. In the polarised setting of the first half of the 1970s, all options seemed within reach from the standpoint of each party.

Beneath these positions lay a perception that the system could be altered while preserving the state at the centre. Few realised that the state in Lebanon could not be rocked any further: there was a built-in threshold beyond which it would break down. And once that happened, it could not be rebuilt. The radicalisation process in the 1970s blurred the distinctions between reforming the political system and shaking its foundations altogether. Missing in these perceptions of the state was the fundamental reality of Lebanon's political system which derived its *raison d'être* from communal consensus and political compromise.

The problem was aggravated by the fact that agendas for change were not strictly domestic. They overlapped with the agenda of a non-state actor, the PLO, armed and mobilised to further its own interests. PLO interests ran counter to the presence of a strong state in Lebanon. Strong state institutions, civilian and military, stood in the way of the PLO's drive for power. After all, the ultimate objective of the PLO was the creation of something close to a state: parallel to the Lebanese state if possible, and in opposition to it, if need be.

The PLO and its Lebanese allies targeted the state, though for different reasons. Demands for internal change by Lebanese parties were wedded to support for the PLO. The problem here had to do with the flawed assumption that a strong PLO would help them reach their objectives. They miscalculated, as the PLO was in competition with the very institution that some Lebanese groups sought to change: the state, irrespective of who controls it. This resulted in an inescapable dilemma: PLO interests clashed with the interests of those groups seeking to alter the structure of power of the state. No politician embodied this dilemma more than Kamal Jumblatt. With Jumblatt in control, the PLO was not going to disarm and give up the armed struggle. Should Jumblatt seek to make the PLO abide by the law and by the terms of the Cairo Agreement, he would have to use force.²

Jumblatt's no-win situation was symptomatic of a much deeper problem: that of the overlapping layers of dissatisfaction fuelled by warfare. Whatever political settlement was possible in the pre-war period, it was no longer possible after the outbreak of war. For if Maronite demands were met, other communities would not be satisfied. If Maronite and Sunni demands were met, Jumblatt would not be satisfied. If the demands of the PLO-backed Jumblatt were met, Damascus would be most dissatisfied. And if Syria's demands were met, Jumblatt, Arafat, and other Lebanese (and Arab parties) would be opposed. No formula in 1976 could have satisfied the conflicting demands of the various internal and external parties involved in the war. The outcome was deadlock, broken only by military escalation.

The Shifting Sands of Opposition: Politics in the First Half of the 1970s This brings us to another unique feature of Lebanese politics: that of opposition politics in the first half of the 1970s. Uniqueness here stems from the interplay between internal platforms of change and pan-Arab politics. In other Arab countries, the authoritarian state sets the ceiling of opposition politics both in form and substance. In

Lebanon, there is no such ceiling. Nor does the state impose norms for a subservient ‘official’ opposition.

What were the implications of this pattern of government-opposition politics for the political process on the eve of the war? The classic distinction between broadly defined Left (seeking change) and Right (seeking to preserve the status quo) ceased to apply in Lebanon in the same way as it applies in countries with a functioning democratic process. If a group (political party or community) in Lebanon advocated progressive and liberal policies towards a domestic issue (for example, secularism, tax laws, personal status law), while at the same time having a conservative or moderate position on the populist pan-Arab issue of the day, that group was labelled reactionary by Arab nationalists. If a party subscribed to an Arab nationalist platform but was uncompromising on other issues and had undemocratic practices, that party was viewed as progressive. What made the party progressive was the nationalist platform rather than its policies on other issues or its internal structure and decision-making process. And if an Arab nationalist party subscribed to a particular platform (Ba'thist, Iraqi or Syrian or Nasserite), the problem then became which brand of Arabism was more progressive and ‘truly Arab’.

This pattern of ideological–leftist–nationalist politics was most visible in the first half of the 1970s. To be reform-minded and progressive on domestic issues, political and non-political, but without giving the PLO unconditional support, was labelled reactionary politics. To support the Palestinian cause and the PLO’s political and other non-military activities while opposing PLO military activities was tantamount to right-wing isolationism. To favour a Leftist platform while not subscribing to an Arab nationalist platform meant that something was missing. And to support the struggle to liberate Palestine while disapproving of the PLO’s policies and failing to pursue the armed struggle in the occupied territories meant betraying the cause.

Lebanon’s opposition politics on the eve of the war were, in a way, a lump sum: a package of domestic, pan-Arab and Palestinian politics. To be selective was to reject the entire package. There was little room for nuanced

politics, moderation and compromise. Political preferences were black and white.

The shifting sands of opposition politics raise another question: that of the dividing line between Lebanon's open internal political platforms and regional politics. This translated into an odd de facto exchange between political reform and sovereignty. Beginning in the 1940s, Muslim, particularly Sunni, acceptance of an independent Lebanon was conditional. It was a function of the Christian, particularly Maronite, opposition to the French mandate. It also meant having a greater share in the political pie. In return, Christians opted for independence and for a conditional identification with Arabism, that of the 'face'. In the late 1950s, the crisis ended as Lebanon identified more closely with Arabism, then associated with Nasser. While not formally stated, Lebanon's Arabism after the 1958 crisis went beyond the Arab face' of 1943. Parallel to this, in the 1960s Muslim influence in the political process continued to increase.

In the early 1970s, the exchange was revived: Muslim support for the PLO, which came at the expense of sovereignty, was linked to demands for change in the power equation. Christian leaders responded by calling for the re-ordering of priorities: sovereignty came first, then the restructuring of political power since in the absence of sovereignty, power would have little political content. When, in February 1976, the Constitutional Document redressed the balance in the power equation, the quid pro quo was no longer operational. By then, Lebanon, the battlefield for the PLO and Syria, was no longer a sovereign country. The nature of the exchange undermined the possibility of any viable settlement. Redressing the balance in the confessional power equation (*ghubn*), as demanded by Muslims, did not necessarily lead to settling the problem of fear (*khawf*) over the loss of sovereignty, as claimed by Christians.

Structural Dichotomy: The Centralised Unitary State Versus Decentralised Political System One explanation for the particularities of Lebanese politics lies in the structure of the political system: the built-in inherent contradiction between the

unitary, centralised state and the decentralised confessional political process. This structural dichotomy is as old as the state itself.

Ever since it came into existence in the 1920s, the state was intended to be unitary and integrationist. Centralised rule sought to foster national unity rather than to strengthen the state. In the absence of any other institution and symbol of national unity, the state was the focal point of national integration. Preceding the unitary state was the confessional system, which was an extension of the *Mutasarrifiyya* arrangement of the early 1860s. In practice, the confessional system was a form of non-territorial federalism. It meant unambiguous recognition of the heterogeneous makeup of society. This overlap between the unitary state and its 'federal' political process resulted in two opposite dynamics: centrifugal and centripetal forces operating simultaneously and, in the process, generating constant tension.

During the mandate, one major function of the state was to bring unity to the country, both territorially and communally. Concurrently, the function of the confessional system was to represent communities and preserve diversity. After independence, the state was the main vehicle for national integration and administrative centralisation, while the confessional system became more important for representation and for access to the political process.

Following the 1958 crisis, the state faced the formidable task of putting the country together. Three objectives had to be met simultaneously: national unity, communal recognition, and a more equitable confessional representation. This multi-dimensional task came to a halt in the first half of the 1970s. The war in 1975 brought the integrative function of the state to an end. The state now was divided and its institutions needed integration. Although the political process was crippled, the confessional system was maintained despite its disintegration into communal domains, each controlled by Lebanese and non-Lebanese groups.³

Since the 1920s, the gap between the unitary state and the decentralised confessional political system has continued to widen. The state has weakened, as has its integrative function. The confessional system, by contrast, has gained significant strength at the expense of the state and, in a

way, outside the state's political domain. This contradictory process has also reflected the divergent views of Lebanese society towards both the state and the political system. One manifestation of such divergence was the way in which Lebanese groups responded to crises associated with the PLO and leading to political paralysis. At the root of this state of affairs lies the structural dichotomy between centralised state institutions and decentralised political system.

Notes

- 1 See, for example, Mahdi 'Amil, *Al-Nazariyya...*
- 2 See Jumblatt's critical account of the PLO in the war, *I Speak for Lebanon*, pp. 67–9 and 111–13.
- 3 In post-war (1990) Lebanon, the state resumed its integrative function, but it is a highly contested state with limited power to perform such a function. The confessional system asserted itself more strongly than before. It moved from a confessional political system to a rigid system of sectarian identification and representation

The Inevitable Confrontation

A State in Search of Stability, A Revolution in Search of a State

The starting point of our study is that Lebanon is a divided society and has an open political system. That, however, need not have generated armed conflict before 1975 and a war afterwards in which several countries were involved. To say that Lebanon was headed towards self-destruction only because of its confessional system or its failure to modernise, or because of its socio-economic problems is to confine ourselves to writing an obituary of the system rather than an analytical study. Our purpose has been to show that the breakdown of the state in Lebanon was due to well-determined factors, both internal and external, linked to the changing nature of regional politics after the 1967 war.

Changing Regional Politics and the Breakdown That regional developments after 1967 were destabilising for Lebanon need not mean that the country was problem-free.¹ But from the late 1960s to the outbreak of war in 1975, Lebanon's major crises

leading to government paralysis were political. None of the cabinet crises was confined to domestic matters; they were all linked to the PLO. From December 1968 to mid-1975 only one cabinet resignation – that of Takieddin al-Solh in October 1974 – was not linked to the PLO. Apart from two cabinet resignations for constitutional reasons (following the presidential election in 1970 and the parliamentary election in 1972), five cabinet resignations in a period of seven years were caused by crises associated with the PLO armed presence and with PLO-Israeli warfare.

In January 1969, 'Abdallah al-Yafi's resignation came following an Israeli raid on Beirut airport. A few months later clashes between PLO guerrillas and Lebanese security forces led to the resignation of Prime Minister Rashid Karame. The seven-month crisis was ended only after the signing of the Cairo Agreement. In 1973, the murder of three Palestinian leaders by an Israeli commando in Beirut, and subsequent confrontations between the Lebanese Army and PLO forces led to the resignation of Prime Minister Sa'eb Salam. A cabinet was formed by Amin alHafiz but was forced to resign two months later. The crisis was ended after the signing of the Melkart Agreement, which was an expanded version of the Cairo Agreement. Lastly, Rashid al-Solh's resignation came a few weeks after the 'Ayn alRummaneh confrontation in April 1975. In short, what paralysed the political process and heightened confessional polarisation during the period 1969–1975 were crises linked to the PLO.

This brings us to the external dimension of the breakdown. Three events were of decisive importance for PLO entrenchment and, subsequently, for the outbreak of war: the Arab–Israeli war in 1967, the Jordan war in 1970–71 and the 1973 Arab–Israeli war. All three events, which took place in a

period of six years, were beyond Lebanon's control. Nor could they be attributed, in any way, to internal Lebanese politics.

In the absence of the 1967 Arab–Israeli war and its repercussions on Arab society and politics, the Palestinian Resistance Movement that emerged after 1967 (as opposed to the PLO formed in 1964) would not have seen the light. Like the 1956 Suez war and Nasserism in the second half of the 1950s, the 1967 war provoked political and military change in regional politics but on a larger scale and at a much faster pace than before.

The second event was PLO defeat in Jordan. Had the war in Jordan in 1970–71 resulted in a different outcome – for instance, the toppling of the monarchy, the defeat of the Jordanian army, military take-over by Syria and/or Israel – the PLO would have either established itself in Jordan or would have clashed with other power contenders. Either way, the PLO would not have been able to relocate to Lebanon the way it did.

The other decisive turning point for Lebanon was the 1973 Arab–Israeli war. For Egypt and Syria, the partial victory in 1973 redeemed the defeat in 1967. After 1973, Egypt opted for direct negotiations with Israel. Syria, for its part, was able to thrive on the status quo. As for the PLO, adjustment after 1973 was far more manageable in comparison with adjustment after the Jordan war.

The PLO presence in Lebanon after 1973 reached the point of no return. Arab armies did better in 1973 than in 1967 and the PLO had nothing to capitalise on, as was the case in 1967. The PLO was stuck in Lebanon. Lebanon, in turn, was stuck with the PLO. Whatever developments took place affecting the PLO, positively or otherwise, they were detrimental to Lebanon's interests and stability. In a way, the outcome of the 1973 war was for Lebanon similar to the outcome of the 1967 war for the Palestinians.

The Inevitable Breakdown The question that can be raised here is whether war could have been avoided had the political system been more responsive to change and had grievances over powersharing been redressed. In other words, how would a reformed

political system have insulated Lebanon's open state and society from regionally generated destabilising change in the post-1967 era?

In theory, Lebanon could have been more immune to regional turmoil had it been problem-free, or had it had a homogeneous society or an authoritarian state. The first two conditions – a problem-free and homogeneous society – were not sufficient to prevent external intervention in Lebanon. This is because the PLO did not enter Lebanon only for the reason that society was divided or because the political system was deficient or because of the poor performance of the economy. What enabled the PLO to enter Lebanon was its democratic system and open society. Such openness was a built-in loophole in the otherwise authoritarian Arab state system.

What facilitated PLO entrenchment was in the first place the presence of a large refugee population, which constituted the natural power base for the PLO. More than any other factor, the refugee population provided the entrée for the PLO in Lebanon. In the absence of the refugee population, or had there been a smaller number confined to one or two camps, PLO armed presence would have evolved differently. The refugee population was also highly responsive to the most radical platforms in Arab and Palestinian politics, irrespective of the nature of Lebanon's internal political process. The PLO did not mobilise the camp population and engage in warfare with Israel only because Lebanon's political system was deficient or because the country had regional disparities and a capitalist economic system. Nor did the Israeli army hit Lebanese and Palestinian targets in Lebanon only because the Lebanese army was weak or because of Zionist designs on Lebanon. Nor did Syria intervene in Lebanon, first to support the PLO and later to contain it, because of Lebanon's ideological backwardness or because of Syria's record in conflict resolution and peace missions in other countries. Nor did Arab regimes intervene in Lebanon to upgrade Lebanon's deficient Arabism or to break the isolationist tendencies of some Lebanese groups.

The PLO, Israel, Syria and other Arab countries pursued policies and undertook actions regardless of the degree of domestic support they

received and regardless of the nature of internal problems of the host country. Arab intervention was possible not because Lebanon had problems which others did not, but because Lebanon was the only open Arab country. Syria and other radical Arab regimes never refrained from destabilising each other, irrespective of the degree of support they had and of the political, social and economic problems of the targeted countries. Israel attacked wherever it deemed necessary, hitting civilian and military targets with the intention of destabilising Lebanon while deepening the Palestinian-Lebanese divide.

If the PLO was not able to establish an autonomous base, for instance in Syria, where there was a large Palestinian refugee population, or Iraq, it was not because Iraq and Syria had no internal problems. Nor was it because Syrian and Iraqi societies were more cohesive and the political system more egalitarian than Lebanon's, but because government was repressive and society closed. Similarly, if Syrian attempts to intervene in the domestic affairs of neighbouring Iraq and Jordan failed, and if Iraq could not intervene in Syria and in PLO politics in Syria and Jordan, it was not because government in these countries had popular legitimacy and a functioning democratic political process, but because the state dominated society and the political process is dissociated from society. Since Syria and Iraq came under Ba'thist rule in 1963, they have sought to destabilise each other. They did this regardless of ideology (which was the same in both countries), of domestic problems and of people's wishes in both countries. And they failed not because of internal unity or because they had no domestic problems, but because of the authoritarian state. It is telling that Michel Aflaq, the founder of the Ba'th party in Damascus and its leading ideologue, would end up receiving a death sentence by Syria's Ba'thist regime.

Where Lebanon parted company with the Arab state system was in its nonauthoritarian state and open society. Here lies the root cause of Lebanon's anomalous standing in crises with a pan-Arab dimension and, by extension, its vulnerability to regional intervention.² Lebanon's internal divisions have facilitated intervention by regional actors and given them momentum especially after intervention took place. But internal divisions were not initially the cause for such interventions. Rather, they were the

cause of their further expansion. Had the Lebanese state been able to resort to those instruments of control that were at the disposal of other Arab states, with or without domestic support, the PLO would have fared no better in Lebanon than in other Arab countries.

To make the opposite argument, that is, by looking at Lebanon and not at changing regional politics, two questions are central. First, if Lebanon did not have a confessional system, and if presidential power was accessible to all communities and not only to the Maronite community, how would PLO-Lebanese relations have evolved? Second, why was the state unable to use force in crises involving pan-Arab issues while maintaining democracy and openness?

Whether Lebanon was ruled by Christians (Maronite or non-Maronite) or by Muslims (Sunni or Shia) or by Kamal Jumblatt, the post-1967 PLO would have still been a problem that had to be dealt with. Two options were available. One was to manage the crisis. This meant making concessions to the PLO, as was the case since 1969. The other was the use of force. In this way, the clash between the PLO and government authorities was inevitable whether the state was under Christian or Muslim control, Leftist or Rightist control or whether the political system was confessional or secular. This is because, as explained above, the causal relationship is less between internal Lebanese politics and the emergence of post-1967 PLO and its entry in Lebanon than between the open state and society and the presence of a large refugee population.

Irrespective of the identity of the ruler and of the ideology and political orientation of the state, confrontation between the Lebanese state and the PLO was bound to occur. Coexistence between Lebanon's *raison d'état* and the PLO's *raison de revolution* was, under the best of circumstances, temporary. The inherent contradiction between the two 'reasons,' that of a state in search of stability and a revolution in search of a state, made military confrontation inevitable. As PLO representative in Lebanon Shafiq al-Hout explained, 'the nature of things supposed a confrontation between the revolution and the state, any state where the revolution had forces based in its territory and where it could move across its borders. It was a matter of time....'³ The war occurred in 1975, but could have been sparked off before or after that date.

The Particularities of Lebanon's Sectarian Democracy

Before addressing our second question – why the Lebanese state could not use force while preserving democracy and openness – a word on the nature of Lebanon's sectarian democracy is necessary.

Democracy in Lebanon is a reflection of the country's plural political culture. It is the outcome of a long process of historical communal development, which began during the *Imara* of Mount Lebanon. The *Imara* tradition of communal tolerance, broken by bloody feuds in the mid- 19th century, gave rise to a system of confessional representation. Democracy was certainly not on Metternich's mind when he proposed the partition of Mount Lebanon into sectarian districts in 1842.⁴ Nor was democracy the result of a conscious decision made by Lebanese communities to uphold proportional sectarian representation during the *Mutasarrifiyya*, at a time when democracy in Europe was still being debated on paper.

With the establishment of the state in 1920, modern democratic institutions began to take shape. The 1926 Constitution was the first major achievement in the process of building Lebanon's sectarian democracy. Paradoxically, sectarian fragmentation in the 19th century served, in the end, as the basis for the framework of democratic political representation. As Harry Eckstein has indicated, it is 'those calamitously improbable combinations of circumstances which actually make democracy work'.⁵

From the 1920s, the idea of communal coexistence began to attract intellectual attention. Michel Chiha, the leading interpreter of the constitution, was an early believer in Lebanon's 'unique mission' of confessional cohabitation in pursuit of religious and political freedom.⁶ For him, parliament was a meeting place for Lebanese communities ('Assemblée qui soit le lieu de rencontre et d'union des communautés'); 'it is not the product of a democratic conception of national life, but a condition of the willingness to live together' ('vouloir vivre en commun').⁷ Chiha was under no illusion about the nature of Lebanon's democratic

system. Indeed, he saw communal solidarity and confessional interaction as a reflection of Lebanon's unique historical development – as a land of last resort. Democracy thus became a pragmatic response to Lebanon's 'accidental situation', to borrow the phrase Tocqueville used in reference to the United States.⁸

In Lebanon as well as in many other countries, 'the hardest struggles' in developing and promoting democracy have been 'those against the birth defects of the political community'.⁹ This has been the constant preoccupation of those political thinkers and leaders who were able to detect the system's weakness but saw a dearth of better alternatives, such as revolutionary transformation. Elections were held in Lebanon, governments changed and the constitution was preserved; but the democratic process was subject to imperfections stemming in part from inequalities in political participation and influence. In the face of these imperfections, three solutions were possible: one was forced assimilation of communal groups, another partition, and a third consisted of a form of the consociational framework of democratic government.¹⁰ Lebanon opted for the latter pragmatic, least costly option.

The alternative for Lebanon as well as for many other non-Western plural societies is not necessarily between the Westminster model of democracy and consociational democracy but rather between consociational democracy and no democracy.¹¹ This was the choice that Lebanon had to make. It was aptly described by Chiha: 'Faute de pouvoir mieux faire, on compartimente cette masse en groupes principaux portant une etiquette confessionnelle.'¹²

Lebanon's realistic approach to communal differences was within the realm of the 'possible', but it certainly fell short of the 'ideal'. To maintain a viable system in Lebanon, Chiha wrote: 'qu'on ne lui demande pas d'aller contre la nature des choses. Il vaudra toujours mieux qu'il vive avec une boiterie plutôt que de se briser les reins. Cela ne doit être interprété en aucun cas comme une initiation à l'immobilité.'¹³ He adds, 'déjà comme nous sommes, nous n'avons plus le choix qu'entre la fraternité et la mort.'¹⁴ In sum, the development of Lebanese democracy was not the result of the kind of socio-economic and political change that characterised democratic development in Western societies but the outcome of the imperatives of

communal coexistence. It was the culmination of a gradual process to reconcile interests shared by Lebanon's communities.

The gradual convergence of communal interests, however, fell short of providing a stable democracy. This condition was necessary, but not sufficient, so long as it lacked one other ingredient: the 'healthy element of authoritarianism'. According to Eckstein, this condition is necessary for the stability of democratic governments, 'not only for the sake of congruence between government and other aspects of society, but for the even simpler reason that a representative government must govern as well as represent.'¹⁵ The closest that Lebanon came to a form of 'healthy authoritarianism' was during the Chehab era in the 1960s. But for some Lebanese at that time, it was an authoritarianism lacking its 'healthy' component.

Lebanon's democratic openness in the midst of the one-party, one-man ruled Arab regimes was inviting for 'undemocratic' practices by the Arab state system. The function of freedom and pluralism that Lebanon's democracy performed was de facto a political vacuum for Arab regimes. As Robert Dahl explained, 'if the liberty of association is a fruitful source of advantages and prosperity to some nations, it may be perverted or carried to excess by others, and the element of life may be changed into an element of destruction.'¹⁶ In Lebanon, the 'element of life' provided by democracy was necessary for communal coexistence to overcome the 'birth defects' of society. It was an imperative for free communal interaction and not an outlet for Arab rivalries and ideological squabbles.

Although Lebanon's democracy did not provide 'optimum' political equality, it maintained a degree of freedom and political openness unmatched by many other Third World countries. Once the breakdown began, communal cleavages solidified. But they did not give rise to a less democratic system, or perhaps to a more authoritarian one, as was the case, for instance, in some European countries in the inter-war period, such as Spain, the Weimar Republic and Italy.¹⁷ Instead, breakdown revived the sectarian instincts of society.

From 1943 to 1975 democracy prevailed, but at a price: opening Lebanon to the destabilising influences of regional politics without providing the means to shield the system from such destabilising repercussions. This state

of affairs had to do with the communal foundations of Lebanese democracy. Within this context, the use of force against the PLO in Lebanon's democracy, which derived its *raison d'être* from communal consensus and compromise, would have undermined the basis of democracy. Hence, Lebanon's predicament: democracy was needed to manage Lebanon's communal relations in an atmosphere of freedom and pluralism as opposed to democracy needed to deal with regional problems over which internal consensus was lacking. In its first function, Lebanon's democracy succeeded; in the second, it failed.

So long as the confessional nature of democratic institutions allowed openness and pluralism, opposition to confessionalism was likely to undermine its *raison d'être*, and, therefore, its democratic character. 'Un changement sans illusion' in the political system, as Antoine Messarra explained, would mean trying to alternate communal cleavages without having to suppress them because 'we do not resolve the dialectic between the state and the communities by suppressing an element of equilibrium in the equation'.¹⁸

Pre-war Lebanon, like many developing countries, had not developed the kind of intermediate political institutions based on popular legitimacy to achieve an orderly transition from confessionalism to secularism. Such a transition in an open and divided society like Lebanon is possible only in a conflict-free environment and over a long period of time.

In the absence of a genuine popular commitment to secularism, a non-confessional order may prevail, but at the expense of democracy and pluralism, for the latter in Lebanon is a function of confessionalism – the antithesis of secularism. Short of an intersectarian voluntary decision to relinquish confessionalism in favour of secularism, the abolition of the former or the adoption of the latter by state decree (or by other forms of imposed change) would have undermined pluralism and, by implication, democracy. Nor would change through violent means have produced a stable, democratic, non-confessional system, as the experience of divided societies under authoritarian rule has confirmed. Conditions for an orderly transition were lacking in the first half of the 1970s. It was difficult to find a middle-ground solution acceptable to all parties, it was equally difficult to 'split the difference' when differences involved non-economic issues.¹⁹

In the end, Lebanon's sectarian democracy was designed to suit Lebanon's communal particularities. It was, so to speak, made for internal consumption and not for export. Nor was it equipped to accommodate 'imports' from Lebanon's regional order – certainly not a revolutionary movement owing its *raison d'être* to a crushing Arab defeat at the hands of Israel.

In light of the above, the following question might be raised: in the absence of the PLO factor in Lebanon, how would Lebanon's sectarian democracy have fared and how would the political process have evolved in the period 1967–76? Two scenarios were likely. The positive scenario would have consisted of a gradual adaptation to change within the framework of the democratic political process. The power equation would then have been more equitable while socio-economic disparities would have been narrowed. In this way, Lebanon would have been dealing with problems that would not have endangered the security and the survival of the state. In the long run, and over a long period free of internal and regionally provoked armed conflict, it would perhaps have been possible for Lebanese society to move towards a less confessional political order while maintaining democracy.

The other scenario would have been a Lebanon facing political and socio-economic problems. Compared with the choices that the state had to make in relation to the PLO armed presence, domestic problems would have been more manageable. At best, they might have been resolved. At worst, they could have been ignored or their settlement postponed. Lebanon's problems would then have resembled those encountered by many other Third World countries where some groups support the government and the political system while others oppose it, and where some groups are more satisfied than others.

Most importantly, domestic problems would have involved issues and policy alternatives over which Lebanese politicians had control and the settlement of which was within their capabilities. Compromise was possible when it came to dealing with domestic problems, as opposed to PLO-generated conflicts whose settlement required compromising Lebanon's security and national sovereignty. There is a marked difference between making political deals between government and opposition and signing an agreement between the Lebanese army and the PLO. With domestic

problems, the loads on the system were commensurate with its capabilities. With regional problems linked to the PLO, the loads were much greater than the capabilities of Lebanon's consensual politics and sectarian democracy.

Notes

- 1 See Chapters 18 and 19, pp. 241–66
- 2 See Chapter 9: The Porous Lebanese State and the Arab State System, pp. 110–22.
- 3 Al-Hout, 'Ushrun 'Aman...', p. 182.
- 4 Salibi, *The Modern History...*, pp. 62–3.
- 5 Harry Eckstein, *A Theory of Stable Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Centre for International Studies, 1961).
- 6 Michel Chiha, *Politique Intérieure* (Beirut: Editions du Trident, 1964): p. 277.
- 7 Ibid., p. 178.
- 8 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1954): 298–309.
- 9 Dankwart A. Rustow, 'Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model', *Comparative Politics* 2 (April 1970): 360. See also Diamond, Linz, and Lipset (eds), *Democracy...*
- 10 Lijphart, 'Consociational Democracy...', pp. 207–25.
- 11 Lijphart, *Democracy...*, p. 3. See also a recent comparative work on conflict regulation in divided societies by John Mc Garry and Brendan O'Leary (eds), *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation. Case Studies of Protracted Ethnic Conflicts* (London: Routledge, 1993).
- 12 Chiha, *Politique...*, p. 17.
- 13 Ibid., p. 93.
- 14 Ibid., p. 27.
- 15 Harry Eckstein, *A Theory...*, p. 31.
- 16 Robert A. Dahl, *Dilemmas of a Pluralist Democracy: Autonomy vs. Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982): 6.
- 17 See Linz, Stepan, *The Breakdown...*
- 18 Antoine Nasri Messarra, *Le Modèle Politique Libanais et sa Survie: Essai sur la Classification et l'Aménagement d'un Système Consociatif* (Beirut: Publications de l'Université Libanaise, 1983): 480.
- 19 Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956): 90–123

War Continues

The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the Arab 'Civil War'

The war, which began in April 1975, ended in November 1976. Armed conflict, however, continued for another 14 years. Why did this conflict not end in the same way as the conflicts of 1958 and 1860 in Ottoman Mount Lebanon?

In 1860 conflict ended only after extensive diplomatic efforts were made in which the Ottomans and five major European powers were involved.¹ Representatives of the six powers met in Beirut for a period of two years to establish a functional political system to bring order to the Mountain. The 50 meetings they held could be likened to an international peace conference convened to settle conflict in Mount Lebanon (and Damascus).² Similarly, turmoil in 1958 ended only after a tacit agreement was reached between a superpower, the United States and a regional power, Egypt. Communal relations were then normalised. Differences between the protagonists prior to, and during the crisis were not an issue of subsequent dispute. This is not because divisive issues were fully settled, but because following the ending of the external dimension of conflict Lebanese groups had little to disagree about.

The 1975–76 war, by contrast, ended with another war involving Syria and the PLO. The political denouement of the war was worked out in two

restrained Arab summit meetings held in Riyadh and Cairo. These rather hasty meetings were neither peace talks intended to resolve conflict, nor were they intended to bring about a national reconciliation. Their main purpose was to find a *modus vivendi*, one which reflected the state of affairs that prevailed in the autumn of 1976 – the least costly formula to accommodate the interests of the warring factions both Lebanese and non-Lebanese.

War continued after 1976 for the simple reason that it was not only an internal Lebanese war. There were three other wars over which the Lebanese had little or no control: the PLO-Lebanese war, the PLO-Syrian war and the PLO-Israeli war. The ending of these wars required a comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This objective was on nobody's agenda in 1976, be it that of the parties to the conflict themselves or that of the superpowers. The cessation of hostilities in mid-November 1976 was possible only when the 1975–76 war had run its course: when the elements of political destabilisation and military escalation had been exhausted. No further conflict could be sustained when Syrian troops overran PLO forces, when Syria's deed was against Soviet will, and when that was done with American backing, tacit Israeli approval and Lebanese support.

Lebanon's Declining Strategic Importance Another reason to explain the continuation of war after 1976 was the lack of direct military and, to a lesser extent, political involvement by the major powers. Unlike other regional wars that led to direct military and/or political intervention by the major powers (the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Iran-Iraq war, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait), war in Lebanon was essentially a regional affair. It affected more the interests of regional powers than those of the superpowers. It did

not constitute a threat to the strategic interests of major powers in the region nor to global security, nor to international trade, as was the case with other regional conflicts.

The above need not mean that the two major powers were not involved in the 1975–76 war or that they had no interests at stake either in containing or escalating war. While Washington kept a low profile through most of the hostilities, Moscow was more actively involved giving military and political support to several Palestinian and Lebanese groups. But neither superpower saw the war in Lebanon in global strategic terms.

War took place at a time when Lebanon had lost much of its strategic importance in comparison with the earlier period in the 1950s and 60s. In the post-independence period, Lebanon's strategic importance in regional politics peaked in 1958, though more for external than for internal considerations. Events like the Baghdad Pact in 1955, the 1956 Suez war, the disturbances in Jordan in 1957, the union between Syria and Egypt, and the military coup in Iraq in 1958 occurred at the height of Cold War politics in the Middle East. These events had a direct bearing on the state of affairs in Lebanon, then identified with the Western camp.

In the 1970s, the opposite process unfolded. Lebanon's value in Western strategic calculations declined. This was due to the changing power structure both in international politics and in the regional order: Egypt under Sadat turned pro-American; the absence of an overwhelming threat to Western interests, as was the case during the Nasser era in the late 1950s; American pre-eminence in the Arab Gulf states and Iran. Moreover, the early 1970s witnessed a period of *détente* between the two superpowers.

Despite the gradual decline in its strategic importance, Lebanon continued to be important for regional power politics, though less because of intrinsic reasons than because of what Lebanon contained: the PLO and the reverberations that the Palestinian problem had on Arab–Israeli and inter-Arab politics. Paradoxically, Lebanon in the mid-1970s was important, but for an unimportant reason. For the major powers, the PLO in the mid-1970s was not strategic in regional politics, particularly for the United States. Nor

did the PLO constitute a serious political threat to Israel. Nor was it, of course, a military threat. For regional actors, however, the PLO had much greater political weight and strategic importance. Apart from Israel, Arab countries like Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Algeria had a stake in the broader Arab-Israeli conflict and in the PLO as a revolutionary movement with a pan-Arab agenda.

While the PLO helped to erode Lebanon's strategic value in the regional system, it was not able to enhance its own strategic standing vis-à-vis the major Western powers in the mid-1970s. The swap carried little strategic significance. For the major powers, notably the United States, this meant the displacement of one marginal actor (Lebanon) by another equally marginal actor (the PLO). In a confrontation between two marginal actors, the interests of the major powers are not at stake.

Being a regional affair, war was to continue after 1976. So long as the state lacked control, Lebanon continued to serve as a convenient and, in many ways, a comparatively cost-free battleground for the ongoing Arab 'civil war' as well as for the PLO and Israel. Battles that could not be fought between Arab states were fought in Lebanon. Likewise, south Lebanon became an institutionalised war zone for the PLO and Israel and later for Syria and Iran.

In 1860 and 1958, conflict was of short-duration. It ended mainly because the interests of the major powers were better served by stabilising Lebanon. In 1975–76 the major powers had no vital interests at stake to actively seek a viable settlement to the conflict. A truce seemed sufficient. Washington would not send marines to Beirut in 1975–76, nor would it engage in sustained diplomatic efforts to find a settlement, as it did in 1958. Instead, quick fix diplomacy was pursued. Similarly, France would not send troops to Lebanon, as it did in 1860, nor would the international community mobilise political and military resources to bring about a comprehensive settlement to the conflict, as it did in the early 1860s. The change over time had been striking: an international settlement to a crisis having an international dimension in the mid-nineteenth century; an international-regional settlement to the crisis in the late 1950s; and a regional (Arab) settlement to the war in the mid-1970s.

Intervention by the major powers in 1860 had a well-defined target: to pacify Mount Lebanon and install a new political order. In 1958 it was to

disengage from conflict and end turmoil through the institutions of the state. In 1976 no new political order was installed, external actors remained in control, and the state had a frail existence. So long as the objectives of regional powers diverged, and because the interests of the major powers were not at stake, it was not possible to end Lebanon's open-ended wars in 1976. As L. Carl Brown noted, wartime Lebanon 'can be viewed as a casualty of the Eastern Question in its most virulent contemporary form, that of the still unresolved Arab-Israeli confrontation'.³

Lebanon's Survival and Utility Given this state of affairs, where do we go from here to deal with Lebanon's situation? For Lebanon to survive, not as a war-torn country nor as a satellite state, but as a stable, democratic country, too many conditions seem necessary. To what extent is this true? The hard fact about Lebanon is that it is divided along confessional lines and that the divide has deepened over time, particularly as a result of the war. In light of this, how can one make the best of Lebanon's reality? Three alternatives are likely: One is to enhance Lebanon's immunity to regional turmoil; the other is to alter the nature and basis of government in the region by making Arab states and societies open and democratic; the third is to have Lebanon join the Arab mainstream of authoritarian rule and closed societies. Needless to say, the latter alternative is the least desirable option for the normalisation of

Lebanon's 'anomalous' situation. The second, while greatly desirable, surpasses Lebanon's capabilities.

There remains the first alternative, the most challenging one: a strong state, a democratic political process, and an open society immune to regional turmoil. One way to do that is to make the political system more compatible with the heterogeneous makeup of society. This means neutralising the principal source of internal conflict in post-1943 Lebanon: the essentially political conflict over the distribution of power among sectarian groups. In practice, this requires an adjustment from unitary to decentralised state to go along with the already decentralised confessional process. The other equally important adjustment is to disengage Lebanon from conflictual regional politics. Lebanon would be better off in a more peaceful regional order, particularly in the Arab East. Ideally, should democracy and political pluralism prevail in Lebanon's immediate Arab order, the regional environment would be a better place for Arab societies and for Lebanon's state and society.

Such questions did not figure in the political debate before and after the outbreak of the 1975–76 war. People then were caught in a vicious circle of self-destruction. This, however, should not obscure the fact the 1975–76 war and its aftermath raise the question of Lebanon's utility in its regional order: either as an independent, plural state or as a convenient side-show for regional conflicts. The problem is compounded by a disturbing reality: Middle Eastern states engaged in conflicts that put into question the political and social order. Whether in the name of ideology or power politics, the issue of the nation-state in many Middle Eastern countries has not been fully settled ever since the downfall of the Ottoman empire in the first World War. Arab countries, in addition to Iran and Israel's sui generis situation, have sought at one time or another to expand and/or to destabilise neighbouring countries. Such actions began in the first half of the twentieth century and have continued to the present.

Almost a century has passed, and the post-Ottoman Middle Eastern state system is yet to take its 'final' political and, in some instances, territorial shape. The Arab–Israeli–Palestinian conflict is one case; the Iran–Iraq war followed by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is another; and Islamist

movements revolting against both state and the social order are still another. In their depth, modern concepts of the nation and the state are more fundamentally contested and are thus more in flux in the Middle East than in other parts of the world.

Contrary to Francis Fukuyama's 'end of history' in the post-Cold War democratic West,⁴ history in the Middle East may have a bright future. There the clash has overlapping layers. It is both between and within civilisations.⁵ It is also between states in the name of interests and civilisations.⁶ By accident or design, Lebanon is party to the clash. In Lebanon, by contrast to other Arab countries, there is something to lose: a breathing space for civilisations, political openness, cultural pluralism, and above all the right and the freedom to be different. This has been Lebanon's predicament before and after the Cold War, in the days of previous world orders and in the era of the new.

Notes

- 1 On the 1860 civil strife, see Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Tauris, 1994): 218–28.
- 2 See the proceedings of these meetings in Antoine Daou, *Hawadith 1860 fi Lubnan wa Dimashq. Lajnat Bayrut al-Dawliyya. Al-Mahadir al-Kamila, 1860–1862*, 2 vols (Beirut: Dar Mukhtarat, 1996).
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Sharara, Waddah, former Leftist activist and writer.

al-Solh, Munah, writer and politician.

Traboulsi, Fawaz, former official of the Organisation of Communist Action.

Tuéni, Ghassan, former Minister and publisher of Lebanese daily *al-Nahar*.

In addition, several other people involved with government, political parties, and the media, were interviewed. Some did not want to be identified. All those interviewed had personal knowledge of the subject matter or were involved in the events during the period covered in the book.

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